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HENRY OF GUISE;
OR,
THE STATES OF BLOIS.

VOL. I.

LONDON :
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HENRY OF GUISE:

OR,

THE STATES OF BLOIS.

BY

G. P. R. JAMES, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF

"THE ROBBER," "THE GENTLEMAN OF THE OLD SCHOOL,"
ETC. ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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DEDICATION.

TO

THE HONOURABLE

FRANCIS SCOTT.

MY DEAR SCOTT,

IN dedicating to you the following work as the tribute of old friendship, and of sincere and well founded esteem, allow me to add a few words in explanation of the course I have pursued in the composition. I do this, it is true, more for the public than for yourself, as you were with me while it was in progress, and by your good judgment confirmed

my opinion of the mode in which the subject ought to be treated.

The character of every person who plays a prominent part on the great stage of the world is of course lauded by friends and decried by adversaries at the time, and the mingled report comes down to after ages. But the mists of prejudice are wafted away by the breath of years. The character of the historian is considered in connexion with those of the personages he has depicted; and allowances are made for errors and wrong views on all sides: the greater facts remain, in general, clear and distinct; and from these, together with those small traits which are rather let fall accidentally than recorded, by contemporaries, the estimate of history is formed.

There are some characters, however, which from various causes remain obscure and doubtful through all time ; and many which have points in them that are never satisfactorily explained, producing acts which cannot be accounted for ; like those waters which have never been fathomed, though we know not whether it be some under current that we see not, or the profound depth itself, which prevents the plumbed line from reaching the bottom. Amongst the many acts recorded in the annals of the world, the motives for which have never been ascertained, one of the most extraordinary is, that of Henry Duke of Guise, when, on the 12th of May, 1588, the famous day of the barricades, he had the crown of France within his grasp, and did not close his hand. Some have

called it weakness, some virtue, some moderation, some indecision ; and in fact, whatever view we take of it, there are points in which it is opposed to the general character of the Duke.

In the account of this transaction, which I have given in the following pages, I have rather attempted to narrate how the event took place, than to put forth a theory regarding the motives. My own opinion is, indeed, fixed, after diligent examination of every contemporary account, that the motives were mixed. I do not believe that the Duke's moderation proceeded from indecision, for I imagine that he had decided from the first not to dethrone the King ; but I do believe that he might be, and was, much tempted to usurp the throne, as the events of the day proceeded. Op-

portunity could not be without its temptation to a bold and ambitious heart like his. Whether he would have remained master of his own conduct, whether he would have been able to struggle against his own desires and the wishes of the people, whether he would have maintained his resolution to the end of that day, had the King not escaped from Paris, is another question. Suffice it that he resisted the temptation as long as the temptation existed; and that he did so deliberately is proved, by his strictly prohibiting the people from surrounding the royal residence, "lest it should commit him too far." Upon this view of the case have I based my narration.

In regard to the death of the Duke of Guise, I had but little difficulty; for the

event is so amply and minutely detailed by contemporaries, that no doubt can exist in regard to any of the facts. In the treatment of the story, however, I had to choose between two courses. A French writer, or writer of the French school, in order to concentrate the interest upon the Guise, would most likely have brought into a prominent point of view his criminal passion for Madame de Noirmoutier, and would have wrought it up with sentiment till the feelings of the reader were enlisted in favour of herself and the Duke.

I did not do this for two reasons. In the first place, it would have been a violation of history to represent Madame de Noirmoutier as any thing but a mere abandoned woman, as her amours with Henry IV. and others clearly show. In

the next place, I consider it an insult to virtue to endeavour to excite interest for vice. It was necessary, indeed, to introduce Madame de Noirmoutier, on account of the famous warning which she gave to Guise on the night before his death ; but I have done so as briefly as possible for the reasons I have just stated.

I have only farther to say, that I know there is a French work bearing the same title, or very nearly the same title, as this. I have never seen that work, nor read any review of it, nor heard any part of its contents, and therefore have no idea whatsoever of how the story is there conducted. Doubtless very differently, and, perhaps, much better than in the following pages ; but, nevertheless, I trust that the public will extend to them

the same indulgence which has been granted to my other works, and for which I am most sincerely grateful:

To you, my dear Scott, I am also very grateful, for many a happy hour, and many a pleasant day, and for many a trait which, in our mutual intercourse, has given me the best view of human nature, and added one to the few whom in this life we find to love and to respect. Accept, then, this very slight testimony of such feelings, and believe me ever,

Yours faithfully,

G. P. R. JAMES.

HENRY OF GUISE;

OR,

THE STATES OF BLOIS.

CHAPTER I.

IT was as dark and sombre a morning, the sky was as gloomy, the earth as dry and parched, as earth, sky, and morning ever appear in the most northern climates. A dull grey expanse of leaden cloud shut out the blue heaven, a hard black frost pinched up the ground, the blades of grass stood stiff and rugged on the frozen soil, and vague grey mists lay in all the hollows of the ground. The forests, the manifold forests that then spread over the fair land of France, showed nothing but bare branches, except where here and there the yoke-elm or

tenacious beech retained in patches its red and withered leaves, while beneath the trees again, the ground was thickly carpeted with the fallen honours of the past summer, mingled with hoar frost and thin snow. A chilliness more piercing than mere frost pervaded the air ; and the aspect of the whole scene was cheerless and melancholy.

Such was the aspect of the day, though the scene was in the south of France, at a spot which we shall leave for the present nameless, when at about seven o'clock in the morning—an hour in which, at that period of the year, the sun's rays are weak and powerless—a tall, strong, florid man of about four-and-thirty years of age was seen upon the edge of a wide wood walking along cautiously step by step, carefully bending down his eyes upon the withered leaves that strewed his path, as if he had dropped something of value which he sought to find.

The wood, as we have said, was extensive, covering several miles of undulating ground, broken by rocks and dingles, and interspersed

by more than one piece of water. It contained various kinds of tree, as well as various sorts of soil; but at the spot of which we now speak the wood was low and thin, gradually increasing in volume as it rose along the slope of the adjacent hill, till it grew into a tangled thicket, from which rose a number of tall trees, waving their grey branches sadly in the wintry air. On a distant eminence, rising far above the wood itself, might be seen towers, and turrets, and pinnacles, the abode of some of the lords of the land; and at the end of a long glade, up which the man we have just mentioned was cautiously stealing, as we have described, appeared a little cottage with one or two curious outbuildings, not usually found attached to the abodes of the agricultural population.

The features of this early wanderer in the woods were good, the expression of his countenance frank; and though poring so intently upon the ground as he passed, there was nevertheless an air of habitual cheerfulness in his countenance, which broke out in the frequent smile, either at something passing in his own thoughts,

or at something he observed amongst the withered leaves. He was dressed in a plain suit of dark brownish grey, with a cap and feather on his head, a sword by his side, and an immense winding horn slung under his left arm; and though at the present moment he was without either horses or dogs, his whole dress and appearance bespoke him one of the huntsmen of some neighbouring lord.

After having walked on for about three or four hundred yards, he suddenly stopped at some traces on the ground, turned into the wood, which in a particular line seemed disturbed and broken, and following the marks, which denoted that some large object of the chase had passed that way, he reached the thicker part of the wood, where, to use his own expression, he felt sure that the boar was lodged.

It would be useless and tedious to accompany him in all the perquisitions that he made round the thicket, in order to ascertain that the animal had not again issued forth from its woody covert. He satisfied himself, however, completely, that such was not the case, and then paused, musing

for a moment or two, till he was roused from his reverie by the distant sounds of human voices and of horses' feet, coming from the side of the glade in which we have first displayed him to the reader's eyes. He now hurried back as rapidly as possible, and in a minute or two after stood uncovered in the midst of a gay and glittering party, on which we must pause for a few minutes, ere we proceed to describe the events of that morning.

There were about twenty persons present, but the greater number consisted of various attendants attached to the household of all French noblemen of that period, under the names of grooms, piqueurs, valets de chiens, chefs de relais, &c. Three out of the group, however, are worthy of greater attention, not alone because they were higher in rank, but because with them we shall have to deal throughout the course of this tale, while most of the others may well be forgotten. The eldest of the three, bore the robe of an ecclesiastic, though in his deportment, as he sat a spirited, and somewhat fretful horse, he seemed fully as

well suited to play the part of a gay cavalier as that of a sober churchman.

His features were fine, though not strongly marked; the nose straight and well cut; the chin rounded; the brow broad and high, and the mouth well formed. But with all these traits of beauty, there were one or two drawbacks, both in feature and expression, which rendered his aspect by no means so prepossessing as it otherwise might have been. The eyes, which were remarkably fine, large, dark, and powerful, were sunk deep under the sharp cut, overhanging brow, looking keenly out from below their long fringed lids, as if in ambush for each unguarded glance or gesture of those with whom he conversed. The lips, though, as we have said, well formed, closed tight over the teeth, which were as white as snow, never suffering them to appear, except when actually speaking. Even then those lips parted but little, and gave one the idea of their being, as it were, the gates of imprisoned thoughts, which opened no farther than was necessary to give egress to those which they were forced to

set at liberty. The nostril, though it was finely shaped, was even stiller and more motionless than the lips. No moment of eagerness, no excited passion of the bosom, made that nostril expand, and if it ever moved at all, it was but when a slight irrepressible sneer upon the lip drew it up with a scornful elevation, not the less cutting because it was but slight.

The age of this personage at the time we speak of might be about forty-five; and if one might judge by the clear paleness of his complexion, a considerable portion of his life had been spent in intense study. The marks of his age were visible, too, in his beard and mustachios, which had once been of the deepest black, but were now thickly grizzled with grey. No sign, however, of any loss of strength or vigour was apparent; and though still and quiet in his demeanour, he seemed not at all disinclined to show, by an occasional exercise of strength or agility, that stillness and quietude were with him matters of choice and not of necessity. He kept his horse a very small pace behind those of his two younger companions; but he so contrived

it that this very act of deference should not have the slightest appearance of humility in it, but should rather seem an expression of what he owed to his own age and character rather than to their superior rank.

The other two were both young men in the very early outset of life, and were so nearly of the same age, that it was difficult to say which was the elder. Both were extremely handsome, both were very powerfully and gracefully formed; and the most extraordinary similarity of features and of frame existed between them, so that it would have been difficult to distinguish the one from the other, had it not been that their complexions were entirely different. The one was dark, the other fair: in one the hair curled over the brow in large masses, as glossy as the wing of the raven; in the other, the same profuse and shining hair existed, but of a nut brown, with every here and there a gleam as if the sun shone upon it. The eyes of the one were dark, but flashing and lustrous; the eyes of the other of a deep hazel, and in them there mingled, with the

bright bold glances of fearless courage, an occasional expression of depth and tenderness of feeling, which rendered the character of his countenance as different from that of his brother as was his complexion.

Notwithstanding the great similarity that existed between them, they were not, as may have been supposed, twins, the fairer of the two being a year younger than his brother. They were both, indeed, as we have said, in their early youth, but their youth was manly; and though neither had yet seen three-and-twenty years, the form of each was powerful and fully developed, and the slight pointed beard and sweeping mustachio were as completely marked as the custom of the day admitted.

On the characters of the two we shall not pause in this place, as they will show themselves hereafter; and it is sufficient to say that there was scarcely a little word, or action, or gesture, which did not more or less display a strong and remarkable difference between the hearts and minds of the two. During their whole life, hitherto, notwithstanding this dif-

ference, they had lived in the utmost friendship and regard, without even any of those occasional quarrels which too often disturb the harmony of families. Perhaps the secret of this might be that the elder brother had less opportunity of domineering over the younger than generally existed in the noble families of France, for their mother had been an heiress of great possessions, and according to the tenour of her contract of marriage with their father, her feofs and riches fell on her death to her second son, leaving him, if any thing, more powerful and wealthy than his elder brother.

The fortune of neither, however, though each was large, was of such great extent as to place them amongst the few high and powerful families who at that time struggled for domination in the land of their birth. The territory of each could bring two or three hundred soldiers into the field in case of need : the wealth of each sufficed to place them in the next rank to the governor of the province which they inhabited ; but still their names stood not on the same list with those of Epernon, Joyeuse,

Montmorency, Guise, or Nemours; and, contented hitherto with the station which they enjoyed, neither they themselves, nor any of their ancestors, had striven to obtain for their house a distinction which, in those times, was, perhaps, more perilous than either desirable or honourable. Neither of them, indeed, was without ambition, though that ambition was, of course, modified by their several characters; but it had been controlled hitherto, perhaps, less by the powers of their own reason than by the influence of the personage who now accompanied them, and whom we have before described.

Not distantly connected with them by the ties of blood, the Abbé de Boisguerin had been called from Italy, where he had long resided, to superintend their education shortly after their mother's death. His own income, though not so small as that of many another scion of a noble house in France, had, nevertheless, proved insufficient through life to satisfy a man of expensive, though not very ostentatious, tastes and habits; and the large emoluments, offered to

him, together with the prospects of advancement which the station proposed held out, induced him without hesitation to quit his residence in Rome, and revisit a country, the troublous state of which gave the prospect of advancement to every daring and unscrupulous spirit.

It may seem strange to say, as we have said, that the influence of an ambitious man had been directed to check their ambition: but he was ambitious only for the attainment of certain ends. He valued not power merely as power, but for that which power might command. Personal gratification was his object, though the pursuit of that gratification, as far as the objects of sense went, was also restrained, like his ambition, by other qualities and feelings. Thus, as an ambitious man, at the time we speak of, he was neither fierce nor grasping; as an epicurean, he was not coarse nor insatiable; and yet with all this apparent—nay, real, moderation—there lay within his breast, unexcited and undeveloped, passions as strong and fierce, desires as eager and as fiery, as ever

burned within the heart of man. He controlled them by skill and habit, he covered them, as it were, with the dust and ashes of his profession, but it needed only an accidental breath to blow them into a flame, which, in turn, would have given fire to every other aspiration and effort of his mind.

He had found it in no degree difficult to obtain a complete ascendancy over the minds of the two young men he was called upon to govern. Their father had plunged deeply, after his wife's death, into the wars and troubles of the times, and he left his two sons entirely to the care and direction of the Abbé de Boisguerin. Thus he had every opportunity that he could desire; and he brought to the task most extensive learning, which enabled him to direct in every thing the inferior teachers. His manners were graceful, polished, and captivating, his temper calm and unruffled: hiding his own thoughts and feelings under an impenetrable veil, never alluding to his past life or his future purposes, he skilfully, nay, almost imperceptibly, made himself master of the con-

fidence of others, and gained every treasured secret of the hearts around him, without giving any thing in exchange. His learning, his wisdom, his acuteness, his impenetrability, won respect and reverence, and almost awe, from the two youths yet in their boyhood: his courtesy, his kindness, his consideration for the errors and the desires of their youth, gained greatly upon their regard; and their admiration and love was increased by some events which took place towards their seventeenth and sixteenth years.

It happened that about that time their master of arms was teaching them some of the exercises of the day in the tilt-yard of the castle; while their governor, with his arms folded on his breast, stood looking on. He usually, under such circumstances, refrained from making any observations; but, thrown for a moment off his guard on the present occasion, by what appeared to him an awkwardness on the part of the master in teaching some evolution, he said courteously enough, that he thought it might be executed better in another manner.

Conceited and rash, the master of arms replied with a show of contempt. The Abbé then persisted; and the other, with a sneer, begged that he might be experimentally shown the new method of the governor. The churchman smiled slightly, threw off his gown, mounted one of the horses with calm and quiet grace, and with scarcely a change of feature, or any other appearance of unusual exertion, displayed his own superiority in military exercises, and foiled the master of arms with his own weapons. Ever after that, from time to time, he mingled in the sports and pastimes of the young men, never losing sight of his own dignity, but showing sufficient skill, address, and boldness to make them look up to him in the new course to which their attention was now directed by the customs of the age.

The Abbé de Boisguerin, however, did not suffer their whole attention to be occupied by those military exercises, which formed the chief subject of study with the young nobility of the day. He had caused them at an earlier period to be instructed deeply in the more elegant and

graceful studies : he had endeavoured to implant in their minds a fondness for letters, for poetry, for music. Drawing, too, and painting, then rising into splendour from the darkness which had long covered it, were pointed out to their attention, as objects of admiration and interest for every fine and elevated mind ; and while no manly sport or science was omitted, the many moments of unfilled time that then hung heavy on the hands of other youths in France were by them filled up with occupations calculated to polish, to expand, and to dignify their minds.

As far as this had gone, every thing that the Abbé de Boisguerin had done was calculated to raise him in the esteem of his pupils ; and when, on the death of their father, they found that their preceptor had been appointed to remain with them till the law placed their conduct in their own hands, they both rejoiced equally and sincerely.

It may be asked, however, whether, of the two brothers, the Abbé had himself a favourite, and whether he was better beloved by the one

than by the other? Still wise and cautious in all his proceedings, his demeanour displayed no great predilection to either. No ordinary eye could see: they themselves could not detect, by any outward sign, that one possessed a particle more of his regard than the other, and both were towards him equally attentive, affectionate, and respectful. But there was one peculiarity in his method of dealing with them, and in the effect that it produced upon either, which showed to himself, and unwittingly showed to one, which was the character best calculated to assimilate with his own.

It more than once happened, nay, indeed, it often happened, that in order to induce them to arrive at the same conclusion with himself, or to lead them to do that which their passions, prejudices, or weaknesses made them unwilling to do, he would address himself, not directly to their reason or to their heart, but to their vanity, their pride, their prejudices: he would politically combat one error with another: he would not exactly assail what he knew to be wrong, but would undermine it; and when he

had conquered, and they were satisfied that he was right in the result, he would then point, with a degree of smiling and good-humoured triumph, to the subtle means which he had employed to lead them to his purpose.

The elder brother would sometimes be angry at having been so led ; but yet he took a certain pleasure in the skill with which it was done, and more than once endeavoured to give the Abbé back art for art. He strove to lead his younger brother by the same means, and more than once succeeded. The younger, however, on his part, showed no anger at having been led, if he were fully convinced that the object was right. He never attempted, however, to practise the same ; and as he grew up, when any act of the kind was particularly remarkable in the Abbé, or in his brother, it threw him into musings more serious than those which he usually indulged in. If it diminished his regard for either, he did not suffer that result to appear ; and when he reached the period at which his mother's estates were given into his own hands, he eagerly besought the preceptor

to remain with them, and insured to him an income far beyond that which any thing but deep affection and regard required him to bestow.

The interest of their father had before his death obtained for the Abbé de Boisguerin the office of a bishopric; but the Abbé had declined it — perhaps, as many another man has done, with more ambition than moderation in the refusal — and he had continued to remain with his pupils, increasing and extending his influence over them, up to the moment at which we have placed them before the reader. He had carefully withheld them, however, from mingling in that world of which they as yet knew little or nothing, and in which his influence was likely to be lost, looking forward to that period at which the circumstances of the times should — as he saw they were likely to do — render the support of the two young noblemen so indispensable to some one of the great parties then struggling for supreme power, that they might command any thing which he chose to dictate as the price of adhesion.

Such was their state at the period which we

have chosen for opening this tale. But there was another point in their state which it may be necessary to mark. They were not themselves at all aware of their own characters and dispositions; nor was any one else, except the clear-sighted and penetrating man who had dwelt so long with them; and he could only guess, for all the world of passions within the bosoms of each had as yet slumbered in their youthful idleness, like Samson in the lap of Delilah; but they were speedily to be roused.

The dress of each requires but little comment, as it was the ordinary hunting dress of the period, and was only remarkable for a good deal of ornament, denoting, perhaps, a little taste for finery, which might be passed over in youth. Of the two, perhaps the younger brother displayed less gold and embroidery upon his green doublet and riding coat. His boots, too, made, as usual, of untanned leather, displayed no gold tassels at the sides; though his moderation in these respects might be in some degree atoned by the length of the tall single feather in his riding cap.

Such were the principal persons of the group which rode into the green alley or glade that we have described in the wood; and the rest, amounting to some twenty in number, comprised attendants of all sorts in the glittering and many-coloured apparel of that time.

CHAP. II.

DID all that are hunted in this world — whether the chase be carried on by care, or villany, or sorrow, by our own passions, or by the malevolence of our fellow-men — did all that are hunted in this world obtain as loud and clear an intimation that the pursuit is up and stirring, as the wild boar which had been tracked to its covert then had, we might have a better chance than this world generally affords us of making our escape in time, or, at least, of preparing for defence.

Much was the noise, great the gingling and the tramp, the whining of impatient dogs, the chiding of surly foresters, the loud laugh and gay jest of their masters, in the glen of the wood within three or four hundred yards of the thicket in which the boar lay sleeping. He woke not with the sounds, however, or, at all events, he noticed them not, while the preparations went on for

putting his easy life in the brown forest to a close.

“Well, Gondrin,” exclaimed the elder of the two brothers, Gaspar, Marquis of Montsoreau — “Well, Gondrin, have you made sure of our beast? is he lodged safely?”

“As safe as an ox in his stall,” replied the huntsman, whom we have seen tracking the steps of the wild boar over the crisp frost-covered leaves of winter. “He has his lair in the thicket there, my Lord, and, as near as I can guess, he is but a hundred yards in. If you go round by the back of the cottage, and station two relays, one on the hill of Dufay, and the other on the bank of the river by the bridge of Neufbourg, you will have a glorious chase; for he can take no other way but down the glen, and then crossing the high road by the river, must run all the way up the valley, and stand at bay amongst the rocks at the end.”

“Beautifully arranged, Gondrin, beautifully arranged,” cried the younger brother, Charles of Montsoreau, Count of Logères; but his elder brother instantly interrupted him, exclaiming,

“But have you not netted the thicket, Gondrin?”

“No, my Lord,” replied the huntsman; “Count Charles said the other day he loved to give the beasts a chance, and lodged as the boar is, you would miss the run, for then he must turn at bay in the thicket and be killed immediately.”

“It matters not, it matters not,” replied Gaspar de Montsoreau. “If Charles like it, so let it be; and yet I love to see the huge beast darting from side to side, and floundering in the nets he did not think of. There is a pleasure in so circumventing him.”

“It is not too late yet,” said the fine rich musical voice of the Abbé de Boisguerin. “The nets can be speedily brought, and the thicket enclosed.”

“Oh no,” cried both brothers at once: “we have no such patience, you know, good friend. Send down the relays, Gondrin, and let us begin the sport at once.”

“I will go round to the left of the thicket with my men,” continued the younger brother,

“and will keep the hill-side as well as if there were all the nets in the world. You, Gaspar, keep this side and the little lane behind the cottage.”

“And what shall I do?” demanded the Abbé with a smile. “I must not show myself backward in your sports, Charles, so I will go with Gondrin here, and some of the piqueurs, and force the grizzly monarch of the forest in his hold.”

The matter being thus determined, the relays were sent down, and the parties separated for their several stations, Gondrin saying to his younger lord as they went round, “If I sound one mot on my horn, sir, the boar is making his rush towards you; if I sound two, he is taking towards the Marquis; but if I sound three, be sure that he is going down the valley, as I said, and must take to the rocks, for he has no chance any other way but by the ford, which he won’t take, unless hard pressed.”

“I will go straight round by the ford and turn him,” replied his young lord. “Then we make sure of him altogether, Gondrin.”

Thus saying, he rode quickly on and took

his station on the hill, where an open space gave him room to plant his men around so as to meet the boar at any point of the ascent, in case the beast turned in that direction and endeavoured to plunge into the depths of the forest.

Some time was allowed to elapse, in order to give the relays time to reach their stations, and then, from the western side of the thicket, were heard the cries and halloos of the huntsmen, as they themselves plunged into the wood, and encouraged the dogs to attack the boar in his lair. For a short space, the hounds themselves were mute; but, in about five minutes, they seemed to have got upon the boar's scent, who had moved onward, roused by the cries of the hunters, and a loud long opening burst announced that they had come upon his track. A minute afterwards, a single note was heard from the horn of the huntsman, and the grey form of the boar glanced for a moment past one of the gaps in the wood where the younger of the brothers had stationed himself; but the beast plunged in again immediately, and a piercing yell from one of the dogs seemed to

show that he had passed through the midst of the hounds, taking vengeance upon them as he went for disturbing his quiet. Shortly after, the horn of Gondrin gave the signal that the boar was rushing down the valley. Charles of Montsoreau paused to be quite sure, but the three notes were sounded again after a moment's silence, and, setting spurs to his horse, he galloped on like lightning to interrupt the boar, and turn him at the ford. The loud cries of the dogs in full chase were sufficient to show him that he was right in the direction he had taken till he issued forth from the wood, and after that he could see with his own eyes the whole scene of the boar's flight, and the pursuit through the open country into which the beast was now driven.

Galloping on with all the eagerness and impetuosity of youth, he made at once for the ford; now catching wide views of the landscape as he passed over the side of some open hill, now losing the whole again as he plunged amidst the leafless vineyards or woods. The country around was thus hidden from his sight, and

he could see nothing but the dull dry stems of the vines, in a low sloping hollow through which he passed, or a few mottled patches of darker cloud upon the dull grey sky overhead — when suddenly his ear caught the sound of distant fire-arms, and he drew up his horse in no small surprise.

The situation of the country, indeed — the wars that were taking place in almost every part of France — the general disorganisation of society, which throughout almost the whole land changed the peasant into the soldier, either for the purposes of plunder or self-defence — might be supposed to have rendered such sounds not at all unfamiliar to his ear ; and, in truth, two years before he would have shown no sign of astonishment to have heard a whole park of artillery roaring in the direction from which he now heard the sound of a few scattered shots. Since, then, however, the tide of warfare had been turned in another direction. In the secluded spot in which he dwelt, few visits from occasional marauders were to be apprehended : the peasantry had returned to their

labours, and no news of any kind from the distant provinces had given reason to suppose that the scourge of civil war was again likely to afflict that part of the country. Some precautions, indeed, had been necessary to keep down petty feuds and plundering excursions amongst some of the inferior gentry and partisans in the neighbourhood ; and the two young noblemen had been called upon to practise some of the most important duties of their station, in maintaining, as far as possible, peace and tranquillity around them.

After pausing, then, for a moment, to listen, Charles of Montsoreau, judging that the sounds he heard proceeded from some new infraction of the law, rode on, determined, as soon as he had finished the all-important business of the chase, to investigate the matter more thoroughly, and to punish the aggressors. All these fine resolutions, however, were changed in a moment ; for almost as soon as they were formed he emerged from the vineyard through which he had been passing, entered upon the open side of the hill, and a scene was presented to his eyes which

excited other and somewhat more painful feelings in his bosom.

Although the point on which he stood was not particularly high, the view was extensive and uninterrupted by any very near object. The valley through which the stream wound was about a mile and a half in breadth, and five or six miles in length; along the whole extent of which the high road was visible, with the exception of a few hundred yards here and there, where a rock, or a peasant's house, or a water-mill by the side of the stream, interrupted the view. At the distance of somewhat more than half a mile lay the bridge over the stream, and half way between it and the spot where the young gentleman stood, appeared one of the large, heavy, wide-topped carriages of the day, drawn by six horses, and driving along at a furious rate, as if in full flight. The driver was lashing his horses with furious eagerness; but ever and anon he turned his head to look behind towards the bridge, where a scene appeared, which showed his anxiety to quicken his pace to be not at all unnatural.

Half upon the bridge and half upon the road, on the nearer side of the stream, appeared a very small body of horsemen, apparently not more than seven or eight in number, contending fiercely with a larger body, as if to give time for the persons in the carriage to escape; and from that spot, rolling up in white wreaths amongst the yellow banks and cold green wintry slopes of scanty herbage, curled the white smoke, occasioned by the discharge of fire-arms. At the distance of about a mile and a half beyond, again, was seen coming up, with headlong speed, a still larger body of cavalry; and it was evident, that at the rate with which the latter were advancing, the carriage and its denizens, if such were the object of their pursuit, would not be very long before they were overtaken.

It is a pleasant weakness in young and generous minds to seek in all strifes the defence of the weaker, even when we do not know whether the cause that we thus espouse be or be not the just one. Charles of Montsoreau paused but for a moment, and then rode down towards the carriage as fast as possible, fol-

lowed by his attendants. The coachman showed great unwillingness to stop; but he had no power of resisting the command which he received to do so, and accordingly, as soon as it was repeated, obeyed. But, at the same moment, the head of an elderly lady, apparently of some rank, was thrust forth from between the curtains of the vehicle, uttering various not very coherent sentences, and displaying in every line and feature indubitable marks of great fear and trepidation.

Brought up in the habit of chivalrous courtesy, the young nobleman instantly raised his cap, and bowing low, asked if he could render her any service. His words were few and simple, but there was great encouragement in his air; and the lady replied, "Oh! for Heaven's sake, do not stop us, young gentleman. We have been basely betrayed by one of our servants into an ambush of the King of Navarre's reiters, who seek to make us prisoners, and Heaven only knows what may become of us if they succeed."

"If the reiters be those that are following

you," said the young nobleman, "there is no earthly possibility of your escaping them, madam, except by taking refuge in the château of Montsoreau hard by. I will give your coachman directions, and then go down and help to disentangle your attendants, who seem to be contending gallantly with superior numbers on the bridge."

"A thousand and a thousand thanks, young gentleman," replied the lady. "But how," she added, with a look of uncertainty, "but how can we tell that we shall be kindly received at Montsoreau, and shall not, perhaps, be treated as prisoners there also?"

"By my promise, madam," replied the young gentleman with a smile, "I am Charles of Montsoreau, the Marquis's brother: will you trust yourself to my word?"

"Most willingly," she said; and turning to the coachman, the young gentleman added, "Drive on with all speed till the road divides, then take the left-hand road up the hill and through the wood; demand admittance, in my name, at the castle, if I should not have come

up in time. But I shall have overtaken you before then. Now, speed on, and spare not your beasts, for the way is not long, if you be diligent."

Thus saying, he again bowed low and rode on, and in a very few minutes had reached the spot where the contention was taking place between the party of light-armed servants attending upon the carriage and the heavy armed reiters.

The young nobleman was not unwilling to signalise himself by any deed of arms that might fall in his way ; but on the present occasion no great opportunity was afforded him, for the numbers he brought to the assistance of the servants appeared so formidable in the eyes of the other party who were already engaged in the fray, that they hastened to draw back for the purpose of waiting in security the arrival of their comrades ; and the only event which took place worth noting was the action of the commander of the reiters then present, who turned deliberately as he retreated, and fired his pistol at the head of the young nobleman with so

true an aim as to send the bullet through his hunting cap, within an inch of his head.

Under any other circumstances, Charles of Montsoreau would not have failed to repay this sort of courtesy with something of the same kind; but recollecting the situation of the persons in the carriage, he showed more cool prudence than might have been expected from his years; and telling an elderly man, who seemed the principal attendant present, that the carriage was proceeding as fast as possible to the shelter of the château of Montsoreau, he bade him ride after it with all speed.

“ You, Martin,” he said, turning to one of his own followers, “ gallop up to the ford, cross it, seek out the hunt, which I can see no longer in the field, and tell my brother what has happened, asking him to hasten back to the castle with all speed. I shall wait here for a time, to watch the movements of the reiters, and see that they do not pursue you — so lose no time, but spur on speedily.”

The man did as he was bid, and for about five minutes Charles of Montsoreau kept his

position upon the bridge, supported by nothing but his own attendants. The servant whom he had despatched to his brother reached the ford and crossed it, without any attempt on the part of the reiters to interrupt him. He then galloped on in the direction of the rocks, at full speed ; and Charles of Montsoreau having seen him, as far as he could judge, in safety, turned his horse, and rode after the carriage and its followers.

In the mean time, while these events were taking place, on one side of the valley the boar, following the plan that the huntsman Gondrin had laid out for him, pursued the course of the stream, and though chased by the dogs in full cry, paused not, and turned not, till at the water-mill a fierce watch-dog rushed out upon him, and received in return a wound from one of the beast's sharp tusks, which laid him dying upon the road. This little incident did not stop the fierce animal for an instant; but it seemed to confuse him, and made him turn from the direct course he was pursuing sooner than he otherwise would have done. He doubled once before

the hounds almost like a hare, and then darting up one of the narrow passes to the right, led hounds and huntsmen a considerable distance from the spot where the chase first commenced, before he was finally driven into the valley of rocks, from which there was no outlet, and where he was, consequently, obliged to stand at bay.

The way that he took led the main body of the huntsmen, with the young lord of Montsoreau and the Abbé of Boisguerin, into a track, from which the other side of the valley was not visible; and their own eagerness, the cries of the numerous dogs, and the shouts and halloos of the huntsmen, prevented them from hearing those sounds which had attracted the attention of Charles of Montsoreau. When the Abbé and the Marquis arrived, they found the noble boar already brought to bay by the dogs, and defending himself stoutly against his enemy. Two of the hounds were already sprawling in their blood beneath his feet, and the Marquis sprang to the ground to put an end to the strife as soon as possible.

Nothing extraordinary occurred to mark

the event of the chase. The boar, like one of those unfortunate men that we sometimes see in the world, upon whom every sort of misfortune falls one after another, torn by the dogs, assailed by the huntsmen, confused by the clamour, was soon killed amongst them ; and Gaspar, whose hand had performed the actual deed, executed all the usual offices of the hunter upon that occasion, and stepping out the boar's length, declared that it was one of the finest brutes that he had ever slain.

“I wonder where Charles is,” he exclaimed, as soon as the whole was completed. “He must have missed us at the turn by the water-mill.”

And thus saying, he gazed down the valley of rocks, through the opening of which might be seen a part of the other valley, with the wood from which the boar had been forced, and the grey towers of the château of Montsoreau rising upon the hill beyond. A single horseman appeared coming up the valley, at the distance of about half a mile ; but as the young marquis gazed in the direction of the castle, his eye

was suddenly attracted by a quick flash which seemed to dart from one of the embrasures, and almost at the same instant a white cloud of smoke enveloped the top of the principal tower. After a short interval, the loud booming report of a cannon made itself heard, and another, and another flash issued forth from the embrasures on the side which commanded the road, while the cloud of smoke around the castle grew deeper and more extensive ; and the repeated roar of the cannon gave notice to the country round that war had returned to disturb the peace which had reigned in those valleys for the last two years.

“What is the meaning of this?” exclaimed the Marquis, turning towards the Abbé — “What can be the meaning of all this?”

“Why, simply,” replied the Abbé, “I suppose some unexpected attack upon the castle, and that your brother Charles has thrown himself into it, and is firing upon the enemy. But, if I mistake not, this man coming up at such speed is his piqueur Martin. He rides to us with news, depend upon it.”

The man soon conveyed to them his own tale, and added the information, that, as far as he could judge from the backward looks that he had cast as he rode along, the body of reiters who had followed in pursuit of the carriage amounted at least to the number of two hundred. The situation of the Marquis and his companions was now in some degree embarrassing ; for their party was far too small to afford a hope of forcing their way into the château at once, if opposed by the superior force which the man described. Measures were, therefore, immediately taken, for calling the peasantry around to arms ; and such was the military and enterprising spirit of the day, that you would have thought from the alacrity with which the pike was grasped, and the steel-cap put on, that some joyful occasion called the good countrymen forth from their homes, and not a matter of peril and strife.

In the course of about two hours, more than forty men had collected in the valley of rocks ; and with this small force, Gaspar de Montsoreau prepared to force his way into the château,

though the Abbé de Boisguerin still remonstrated with him on the smallness of the number, and advised him to wait for further support. As they were discussing the matter, however, the huntsman Gondrin stepped forward, and, with a low inclination of the head, addressed his lord.

“ I think, sir,” he said, “ if you would let me guide you, I could bring you through the wood to the postern under the rock, without these German vagabonds catching the least sight of your march ; and at that postern, you know, defended by the guns of the château, you could defy the whole world till the postern is opened.”

“ How do you propose to do it, Gondrin ? ” demanded the Abbé, scarcely giving the young lord time to reply.

“ Why, I mean,” replied the man, “ to go round under the hill to the road between the deep banks, which would cover a whole troop of men at arms, much less a small body, such as we have here. That leads us straight into the wood behind my house ; and then there is the path which I always follow myself in coming up to the

château. It never leaves the covert of the wood till it reaches the postern, or at least the little green that opens before it."

"Oh, Gondrin is right, Gondrin is right," exclaimed the young marquis. "He is always sure of his way. Lead on, Gondrin: keep about twenty yards in front, and we will follow as orderly as we can. But some one bring along the boar! we must not leave the boar behind!"

The march was then commenced; and the only farther observation that was made upon the proposed course proceeded from the Abbé de Boisguerin, who said in a low voice to the young nobleman, "My only reason for questioning Gondrin so closely was, that he has always shown a much greater fondness for your brother than yourself, as you must often have observed; and I thought he might lead us all into greater peril than needful, in his zealous eagerness to succour Charles."

The Marquis did not reply, but rode on thoughtfully; and yet, upon words as light as those, have often been built up in this world

rancours and jealousies never afterwards extinguished. In the present instance, indeed, and at the present moment, the effect went no further than to make Gaspar of Montsoreau ask himself, "I wonder why Gondrin should love my brother better than myself? and yet I have remarked he does so."

As they marched on, the sound of the cannon was still heard from time to time; but at length, as they entered the wood, it ceased, and was heard no more. After threading the narrow path by which Gondrin led them, they issued forth upon a green slope beneath an angle of the rock on which the château stood. The chief road leading to the castle was visible from that point; but no body of reiters was now to be seen there; and the moment that they were perceived and recognised from the battlements, glad shouts and gestures from the retainers on the walls gave them to understand that the enemy had thought fit to abandon their object, and retreat. Perhaps Gaspar of Montsoreau was not quite satisfied that the defence should have been made and the enemy frustrated by his

younger brother; but his heart was still sufficiently pure and upright to make him angry with himself on detecting such sensations in his bosom.

CHAP. III.

THOSE who have never lived amongst strange and stirring events, those who have never been accustomed to hourly danger, and to continual change, form no idea of the ease with which the human mind reconciles itself to the various rapid alternations of our fate, and how soon the habit of enterprise, excitement and hazard, produces an appetite for the very things that would seem abhorrent to our nature.

The incident of the appearance of the reiters in that part of the country, of their attack upon the château of Montsoreau, and of the absence of its lord at the moment, might have ended by the capture and burning of the castle, and by the massacre of all within its walls. But the moment that it was over, the Marquis and his train rode in, and springing from his horse, he entered the hall, laughing gaily at the

perilous events just past. Finding no one there but some servants, he next proceeded to a part of the building which was called the Lady's Bower, where he was informed his brother now was, with the guests who had so unexpectedly taken refuge in the château. He was followed thither by the Abbé de Boisguerin, and on entering they found a scene which — though of no very stirring character — we must attempt to paint for the reader's eye.

The lady's bower was a large, lightsome chamber in one of those towers of the château which was least likely to be exposed to the fire of artillery in case of attack — for we must remember that every nobleman's house in that day was built chiefly with a view to defence, and was in fact a regular fortress, as far as the science of the time could render it so. The windows of the bower looked over the most abrupt part of the hill on which the castle stood, and, beyond that, upon the wide woods, that, sweeping away down into the valley, covered an extent of many miles of low and gently undulating ground, which afforded no eminence whatsoever, within

cannon shot, that was not completely commanded by the castle itself. The bower had also the advantage of being on the sunny side of the building, turned away from the cold north, and from the east, and looking to the land of summer, and to the point where the splendid sun went down after his daily course. On the day that we have mentioned, indeed, the great light-giver vouchsafed but few of his beams to the world below; but in the huge fire-place of the lady's bower, which was furnished with its comfortable seats all round, blazed up a pile of logs, giving heat sufficient to the whole room, to compensate for the absence of the sun.

At a little distance from the fire was collected a group of persons, of which the graceful and dignified form of Charles of Montsoreau was the first that caught the eye. He was standing with his hunting cap in his hand — the long plume of which swept the floor — and was bending in an attitude of much grace to speak with a lady who was seated in a large arm-chair, and who, looking up in his face, was listening with apparently great

interest to all that he was saying. That lady, however, was not the one who had spoken to him from the carriage. She, indeed, sat near, while three or four female attendants, who had come with her in the vehicle, stood behind. But the lady to whom Charles of Montsoreau was speaking was altogether of a different age, and of a different appearance.

She was apparently not above nineteen or twenty years of age, and certainly very beautiful, although her beauty was not altogether of that sparkling and brilliant kind which attracts attention at once. The features, it is true, were all good; the skin fair, soft, and delicate; the figure exquisitely formed, and full of grace; but there were none of those brilliant contrasts of colouring that are remarkable even at a distance. There was no flashing black eye, full of fire and light; the colour on the cheek, though that cheek was not pale, was pure and delicate; the hair was of a light glossy silken brown, and the soft liquid hazel eyes, screened by their long lashes, and fine cut eyelids, required to be seen near, and to be marked well, before all the beautiful depth

and fervour of their expression could be fully perceived. There was one thing, however, which was seen at once, which was the great loveliness of the mouth and lips, every line of which spoke sweetness and gentleness, but not without firmness — tenderness, in short, gaining rather than losing from resolution. Those lips were altogether peculiar to the race and family to which she was — not very remotely — related; and it was to their peculiar form and expression, that was owing that ineffable smile which is said to have borne no slight part in the charm that rendered her nearest male relative at that moment all-powerful over the hearts of men, made him, Henry of Guise, more a king in France than the sovereign of the land — at least as far as the affections of the people went — and which had added the crowning grace to the beauty of the unfortunate Mary Stuart.

The dress in which this fair girl was clothed was that in which she had been travelling, and consequently there was but little ornament of any kind about it; and yet the blood of the princely Guises spoke out in every move-

ment and in every attitude, too plainly for any one to have mistaken her for aught but what she was, had she been dressed even in the garb of a peasant.

The elder lady, clothed altogether in black, with her grey hair drawn back from the point of the black velvet curch with which her head was covered, and an eager, somewhat restless, eye, presented no points either of great interest or attraction, and appeared what, in fact, she really was, a poor and distant relation of the young lady whom she accompanied, willing to derive competence, importance, and dignity from acting the part of companion to one above herself in worldly advantages.

It frequently and naturally happens, that persons in such a situation lose all native dignity of character, and become at once subservient to those above them, and domineering to those below. This, indeed, is not always the case ; and when it is not, the great trial of the human heart, which such circumstances inflict, but leaves the character of those who endure it well, more bright and noble than

they otherwise would have appeared. But in the present instance, the result was the more common one, and the old Marquise de Saulny, though possessing several good qualities, presented, in general, a character but little estimable. Talkative till she was repressed; loving to rule and direct the household of the young lady to whom she was attached; excitable, and somewhat tyrannical by nature, but subservient by habit and by policy, she was often inclined to affect a degree of power and authority over her fair companion, which the sweet girl herself but rarely thought it worth while to oppose, but which, as soon as she did oppose it, sunk into the most perfect submission and humility. Often, too, she would make an effort to engross the whole conversation, and in ordinary instances did so without any fear of rivalry from her less loquacious companion; but whenever the young lady herself showed an inclination to speak, Madame de Saulny was silent, or only conversed with the inferior persons round about her in a low tone.

As we have said, it was by the side of the

younger lady that Charles of Montsoreau was now standing, giving her apparently an account of the events that had just passed, while she, with her soft eyes turned eagerly towards his face, listened to every word he uttered with deep interest, and asked him manifold questions as he went on.

It would seem that Charles of Montsoreau had not been aware of the return of his brother, for he started slightly at his appearance, and the young lady turned her eyes towards the door with an inquiring look, as the Marquis and the Abbé de Boisguerin entered.

“This is my brother, madam,” said Charles of Montsoreau, taking a step forward. “Gaspar, I have been acting as your lieutenant here during your absence. The man I sent to you doubtless told you what had then occurred; and although I knew not, when I offered these ladies in your name the protection of your château, whom it was I had an opportunity of thus slightly serving, I was quite sure that I only did what you would have done if you had been present.”

“Undoubtedly, my gallant brother,” replied the Marquis—“you did all that was right, and all that was chivalrous. For my own sake, I must regret my absence at the moment when these events took place; but for these ladies’ sake I cannot regret it, for I know none who would welcome them more warmly, or defend them more gallantly, than you, Charles.—And so you have stood a siege and won a battle during my absence, while I have only had the luck to kill a huge boar.—I hope,” he added, advancing towards the younger lady, “I hope that you have neither suffered great fear nor great inconvenience; and though it is possible that these reiters will linger about in this neighbourhood for some time to come, being now upon our guard, we shall soon have men enough under arms to protect you against any further violence.”

While he had been speaking the young lady had regarded him attentively, but with a very different glance from that which she had been giving to his brother. It seemed as if the events which had taken place had rendered

her familiar with the one, even in the short space of time which their acquaintance had yet lasted, and she looked upon him as a friend, while she gazed upon the other as a stranger. She replied courteously, however, thanking him for the hospitality which had been shown to them, and assuring him, that though she had certainly been very much frightened while they were flying from the pursuit of the reiters, yet she had lost all fear as soon as they were within the walls of Montsoreau.

“You have forgot one thing, Charles,” said the Abbé de Boisguerin, advancing, “which is to present your brother and myself formally to these ladies; for we, who were unfortunate enough to be absent on a less pleasing occupation than that of giving them assistance, do not yet know to whom you have been fortunate enough to afford protection.”

Charles of Montsoreau coloured slightly, as he was reminded of his omission, and then presented his brother and the Abbé to the Marquise de Saulny and Mademoiselle de Clairvaut.

At the name of the latter, the brow of the

Abbé de Boisguerin, which had been somewhat contracted, expanded in a moment, and his lip lighted up with a bright smile.

“If I am not mistaken,” he said, bowing low to the younger lady, “Mademoiselle de Clairvaut is niece of that most noble prince the Duke of Guise.”

“My mother was his niece,” replied the young lady; “but I may boast that his affection is not less for me than if I were myself his niece — I may say his daughter.”

“Well may any one be proud of his regard,” replied the Abbé, “and well, I feel sure, may the Duke of Guise also feel deep regard for Mademoiselle de Clairvaut. But I trust that this young gentleman has already taken care you should have some better entertainment than the report of cannon. You have, I hope, had some refreshment.”

“No,” replied the young lady, with a smile, as she saw the colour again come up into the cheek of Charles of Montsoreau at the implied reproach; “no, he has been sufficiently occupied, till within the last half hour, in defending us

from the enemy, who seemed at one time, I understand, resolved to storm the château; and since then, I have kept him giving me answers to many foolish questions; so that he has had no time to think of offering refreshment to any one — though I know, my good Madame de Saulny, that fear always makes you hungry.”

“Not such fear as we have had to-day, dear Marie,” replied Madame de Saulny. “It has been quite enough to-day to take away my appetite altogether, till I heard that we were quite safe, and those hateful reiters gone from before the gates. How I shall ever gain courage to set out again I do not know.”

“I only trust, dear madam,” said Gaspar de Montsoreau, “I only trust that your terror may last a long while, so that we may keep our two fair prisoners within our château till such time as all the roads are in perfect safety.”

The colour came a little more deeply into the cheek of Marie de Clairvaut.

“I think, indeed,” she said, “that we ought to set off again as soon as possible. We owe you many, many thanks, gentlemen, for the pro-

tection you have already afforded, and the hospitality you are willing to show. But as I am hastening by my uncle's direction to my estates near Dreux, where I expect to meet him, I fear I must not linger by the way. Some of our poor attendants, I understand, are wounded; these we must leave to your kind care. But I hope it will be found possible for us to proceed on our way before nightfall."

"You will pardon me, madam," said the Abbé de Boisguerin, "and my young friends here will pardon me for taking the matter in some degree out of their hands; but believe me, what you propose is perfectly impossible. It would be madness to attempt it. I should hold myself, as an ecclesiastic, deeply criminal, were I not at once to remonstrate against such a proceeding. The whole country, between this and Dreux, a space of more than two hundred miles, is filled with the bands of the King of Navarre, especially the Germans, and other heretics in his service. I take it for granted, that you have got a passport and safe-conduct from some of his chief officers; but the conduct of the reiters

towards you this day must have shown you how little such safe-conducts are respected by those bands of ruffians."

"Indeed," said Madame de Saulny, "you give us credit, sir, for more prudence than we possess. We have neither passport nor safe-conduct from any of the heretic leaders; for this young lady was so anxious to obey the directions of her uncle at once, that she would stay for no remonstrance."

"Now that we have her here, however, she must submit to be more strictly ruled," said Charles of Montsoreau with a smile.

"Ay, but we have your promise that we should come and go in safety, and without opposition," said Marie de Clairvaut in the same tone, and likewise with a smile. "You surely will not shut the castle gates against my departure."

"No, we will not do that," said his brother; "but we will reverse the usual course, if you prove refractory, and turn you over from the secular arm to the power of the church, fair lady. Our excellent friend, the Abbé here, shall decide upon your fate, and I feel sure that his decision

will be ratified and confirmed by your princely uncle."

"My judgment is soon pronounced," said the Abbé. "In the first place, before you can or ought to stir a step from beyond these walls, you must absolutely procure a safe-conduct from Henry of Navarre, or some of his principal leaders. We will send off a messenger to obtain it; and in the mean while a courier shall be also sent to his Highness the Duke of Guise, to give him notice of where you are, and to have his good will and pleasure in regard to your farther proceedings."

The young lady turned an inquiring glance upon her companion. It was a look of much doubt and hesitation; but whatever might be her own wishes upon the occasion—whether inclination led her to stay, or feelings of propriety prompted her to go—her appealing eyes were certainly turned to a personage whose mind was already made up as to what was expedient to be done. Madame de Saulny loved not reiters at all; the sound of their galloping hoofs in pursuit of the carriage, the report of fire arms upon the bridge,

the roaring of the cannon from the castle, were all still ringing in her ears, and persuading her, in a very loud and imperative voice, that on such a cold day, and in such perilous circumstances, a warm comfortable mansion, good food, good lodging, and good attendance, with the society of two handsome young men, and an agreeable ecclesiastic, formed a whole infinitely preferable to a dull high road in frosty weather, coarse lodging, bad inns, dangerous driving, and fears at every turning.

“Now, my dear Mary,” exclaimed Madame de Saulny, “you see that all my opinions are fully confirmed by authority, which I trust you will pay a little more attention to. This excellent gentleman has only said what I said before, and if you persist in going, the consequences be upon your head.”

“My only fear,” replied the young lady, “is that the duke should not approve of my staying. But when the opinion of every one is against me, of course I must yield.”

“Do not be the least alarmed in regard to your uncle,” replied the Abbé; “he shall be

fully informed that you were very desirous of falling into the hands of the reiters ; but that we would not permit you to have your own way, and detained you here by force against your own will."

" Under those circumstances, of course, I have no choice," said the young lady, " but I will beg that no time may be lost in despatching the messengers, so that I may not have to reproach myself with unnecessary delay of any kind."

The Abbé and his two young friends assured her that no delay should be used ; and it now being settled, according to the wishes of all parties but herself, that Mademoiselle de Clairvaut and her companions were to remain at the castle of Montsoreau for some days, her two young hosts, placed in a new but not unpleasant situation, busied themselves eagerly to provide for her comfort, and to make her hours fly as happily as possible. The first thing to be done was to give her and her companions some refreshment. The best apartments of the castle were allotted for her use ; and although she could not

help feeling that her situation was somewhat strange; though it occasionally made her heart beat with the apprehension of not doing what was right, and caused the colour to come more deeply into her fair cheek when she thought of it; yet Marie de Clairvaut, somewhat like a bird escaped from a cage, felt, in the midst of timidity and apprehension, a joy in her little day of liberty, and prepared to make herself as happy as she could.

CHAP. IV.

THE prudent plans and purposes of the most prudent and politic people in this world are almost all contingent — contingent, in the first place, upon circumstances, the great rulers of all earthly things, and, in the second place, not less than the first, upon the characters, thoughts, and feelings of the very persons who frame them. Many a one may be tempted to tell us, that it must be a prudent man to form prudent resolutions, and that such a prudent man will keep them; but now the reverse of this common-place reasoning is directly the case, and the most prudent determinations are but too often taken by the most imprudent people, and violated without the slightest ceremony or contrition. This is, indeed, almost universally the case; for really prudent people have no need to make resolutions at all, and those who make them have almost

always some intimation in their own mind that there is a likelihood of their being broken.

The case of Marie de Clairvaut was not exactly that of a person either wanting in prudence or in firmness. She often considered thoughtfully and long, regarding proprieties and improprieties before she determined on any course of action; and, in the present instance, as she sat by her solitary toilet-table in her own chamber, she revolved in her mind her situation — the guest of two young and wealthy nobles; and although she felt perfectly confident, both from their whole demeanour and from the redoubted power and influence of her uncle, that she would be treated with the most perfect courtesy, hospitality, and kindness, she saw that she would have in some degree a difficult task to perform, both in regard to them and to herself.

Though younger than either of them, Marie de Clairvaut had seen a great deal more of the world; and from her own circumstances, and those of her family, she had been called upon to consider subjects and to deal with events,

which rarely fall within the scope of a young, a very young woman's reflections. We have said in the end of the last chapter, that Marie de Clairvaut prepared to make herself as happy as she could; and it was the feeling that she had given way somewhat incautiously to such a design, during the first day that she had spent within the walls of the château of Montsoreau that made her — as she sat preparing to retire to rest — think seriously over her situation, and, as we have said, frame her resolutions according to the result of her reflections.

Some time was likely to elapse before she could hear from her uncle; and in the meanwhile two great perils menaced her in her present situation, as great and as probable, perhaps, as any that fancy painted in regard to her falling into the hands of the reiters, though certainly of a very different character. The first of these perils was, that either of her two gay and gallant hosts should fall in love with her. The days of chivalry were not then over — men did occasionally fall in love with a lady and not with her wealth; and there had been

observable more than once, on the countenances of the two brothers, various looks and expressions so strongly indicative of admiration, that Marie, without any particular vanity, might well suppose that warmer feelings still, might spring up in the track of those which had risen already so rapidly.

The next great danger was one of a still more terrible character — it was, that she herself might fall in love with one or other of the brothers. Now there were various things which rendered this probable, as well as various things which rendered it improbable. In the first place, though of a gentle and affectionate disposition, she had never yet seen any one whom she could really love; and though she had mingled with courts and moved in scenes where those startling changes were constantly taking place which try and ultimately use and wear away the finer feelings of the human heart, yet her bosom had been originally richly stored by God with warm, and kind, and generous sensations; and all that she had seen of the world and its worldliness had but

tended to make her not only hate and detest it, but cling to any thing that savoured of a fresher nature. She had lived enough in courts and crowds to make her abhor them, but not enough to forget her abhorrence; and she was now cast entirely into the society of two beings as little like those courts and crowds as it was possible to conceive: she was dependent upon them for amusement, support, protection; and withal there was that touching knowledge that she was admired and liked; which, to a generous and a feeling mind, is fully as powerful — though acting in a different way — as to a vain and a selfish one.

Had there been, in the simplicity and the want of knowledge of the world which characterised the two brothers, any thing in the least degree laughable or extravagant, there might have been no occasion for fear; but such was not the case: their manners and their tone were in the highest degree courteous, nay, courtly. They felt within themselves the station in which they were born, the high education which they

had received, the superiority of their mental and corporeal powers over most of those with whom they had ever been brought in contact; and that feeling added a dignified and somewhat commanding ease to the grace which nature had bestowed and education improved.

Marie de Clairvaut then considered all these things calmly and deliberately, wisely making use of her own dispassionate judgment, so long as she knew that judgment to be cool and unbiassed. The reader, skilful in the human heart, perhaps may be inclined to ask, whether there was or was not really some little indication, in her own heart, of a liking and admiration for one of the two brothers, which caused her to be thus circumspect and careful? All that we can answer is, that she herself did not think so; but merely feeling that, placed in an unusual situation, she was responsible to herself, and to them, and to her uncle, for her conduct, she took the very first opportunity of contemplating all the circumstances that surrounded her, in order to shape her conduct by the dictates of reason. She took a strong resolution, in-

deed, but that was the only indication of weakness that she discovered.

In the first place, then, she resolved, on her own part, not to be betrayed by any circumstances whatever into falling in love with either the elder or the younger brother; and, in the next place, she resolved to do all in her power, without acting insincerely in any degree, or discourteously, to prevent either of them from falling in love with her. Such a resolution implied that she was not to allow herself to be so happy as she had at first hoped and expected to be; but, nevertheless, she framed her purposes accordingly, and determined that only so much of her time should be given to the two brothers as kindness and lady-like courtesy required. She would not attempt to assume a false character, for such a thing was quite contrary to the frankness and sincerity of her nature. While she was with them she would appear what she really was, but she would avoid, as far as possible, all those occasions of intimacy and constant communication, which her residence in their mansion,

during troublous times, might naturally produce.

Now, all this was very wise and very prudent and we have endeavoured to show, that Marie de Clairvaut was not one of those people whose prudent resolutions are taken from a consciousness, secret or avowed, that prudence itself is wanting. Nevertheless, Marie de Clairvaut was a girl of less than nineteen years of age, and no more mistress, either of events, or of her own conduct and resolutions, under particular circumstances, than if she had been fifty. She began her plan, indeed, on the following morning, by pleading occupations of various kinds as an excuse for remaining the greater part of the day in her own apartments. But, alas! there were two enemies in her own camp.

One was Madame de Saulny, who thought herself bound to remain with her fair cousin, and yet had a very strong inclination for the more extended society which the château afforded. The other was a still more dangerous foe, namely, herself, who, to say sooth, found

the time pass uncommonly heavily, having with her on her journey neither books, nor any other of those sources of occupation which might have helped to while away the hours in the solitude of her own chamber. Having but a fretful companion in the good marquise, and none of any interest amongst her inferior followers, the first day wore away tediously, and, if we may say the truth, the hours that she gave up in solitude had the evil effect of making those that she spent with three intelligent and highminded men appear far more delightful than they might otherwise have done.

She found, also, that all three possessed accomplishments very rare amongst the high nobility of that day; that the whole world of art and nature, as far as it was then known, had been opened to their inquiries: and not only did music, and song, and poetry, aid to make the day pass pleasantly, but they also rendered the conversation that occupied another portion of the time refined, and bright, and comprehensive. They were not driven to talk of nothing but horses, or armour, or the battle-

field, or the chase, though such matters were not altogether excluded; but, as must ever be the case, every subject spoken of received a peculiar colour, a tone, a shade from the mind and habitual feelings of the speaker. If Charles of Montsoreau spoke of a horse, it was not in the terms of a horse-dealer, but it was either as the sculptor, the painter, the poet, or the soldier: he dwelt upon the beauty of its form, the docility of its nature, the fiery energies which render it the most poetical object in the whole inferior creation. If he talked of the chase, it was not alone of the slaughter of stout boars, or the tearing down the antlered quarry; but it was of the eager excitement of the scene; the rapid motion through fair woods and bright prospects; the music of echo and the hounds; the expectation, the strife, the slight portion of danger; of all, in short, which makes the real difference between the hunter and the butcher.

Marie de Clairvaut was not so much of a recluse the second day as the first; and with music, and song, and conversation, such as we have described, it passed as pleasantly as might

be; but there were several other little incidents which from time to time took place to vary any monotony that might have been felt. A report of reiters having been seen at a small distance reached the castle in the morning, and some horsemen were sent out to ascertain the fact. Preparations of different kinds were made for offering indomitable resistance in case of any fresh attack by a larger force. The armoury was explored; and while every sort of weapon needful for arming the peasantry was brought forth, pikes, and arquebuses, and morions, Charles of Montsoreau pointed out to Mademoiselle de Clairvaut many a curious old relic of other days, to each of which some legend was attached—the casque and hauberk of the crusader, the arms of some noble ancestor slain on the bloody field of Poitiers, or still older and less certain, the gigantic gauntlets of a follower of Hugh Capet, and the mighty sword and horn of one of the paladins of the Great Charles.

Then came in the youthful peasantry to be enrolled—some called upon as of right by their

young lords, but many flocking with voluntary readiness to the château at the first sound of war; then a tour of the battlements was to be made, and Marie de Clairvaut, accompanied her two young hosts round the towers and the walls, gazing from breastwork and embrasure over as bright, but as curious, a scene, as it was possible to conceive. The light mist which we have mentioned as occupying the lower parts of the ground on the day before, had been dispelled during the night by the severity of the frost; but it had settled down upon all the branches and stems of the bare trees in glittering crystals of white, which now reflected with dazzling brilliancy the rays of the clear unclouded sun.

Perched, as was usually the custom at that time, upon one of the highest points of the country round, even the windows of the castle commanded a very extensive view: but from the tops of the higher towers on which Marie de Clairvaut now stood, miles beyond miles were extended beneath her eye on every side; and the whole shone bright and clear in

the sun's light, displaying a varied landscape of forest and field, and hill and plain, all covered with the same glistening frostwork, and only varied in hue by the deep shadows cast by the low winter sun, and by the blue tints of the far distance, where the distinction between field and forest was lost, and some high hills bounded the prospect.

Though somewhat monotonous, there was much to admire; and Marie, and those who accompanied her, stopped often to gaze and to comment on the scene. It must be acknowledged, that Charles of Montsoreau kept not far from her side as she walked on, and that, though his brother was near her on the other hand, it was towards the younger that she generally turned, either to hear what he said, or to make some observations on the objects beneath her eyes. Throughout the course of that day, indeed, she gave him much of her attention, perhaps a greater share than his brother thought quite equitable; and certainly had Marie been asked, when she retired to rest that night, which of the two brothers was the most grace-

ful, which sang, or spoke, or acted most pleasingly, she would undoubtedly have fixed upon Charles.

Perhaps she might ask herself some questions on the subject; but her heart was sufficiently free and at ease, to make her believe that there could be no earthly harm in preferring the society of one in a slight degree to that of the other, and of rendering justice, as she considered it, to both. If there was, indeed, in her own mind the slightest idea that any particular feeling of preference was growing up in her bosom for Charles of Montsoreau, the only effect that it had was, to make her think it was very natural such a thing should be the case, as he had been the first to give her assistance and protection, and to peril his life in her behalf. Though the elder was very courteous, she thought, and very kind, and graceful, and agreeable, it could not be expected that she should like him as well as the person who had been actively interested in her defence; and thus she slept at ease, imagining that both brothers were but mere common acquaintances,

who might never be thought of three times after she left them ; though, in comparing the one with the other, she was inclined to like the younger better than the elder brother.

While the two young noblemen had been carried, by the most natural feelings in the world, to bestow the chief share of their attention upon the beautiful and interesting girl who had so suddenly and strangely become an inmate of their dwelling, the Abbé de Boisguerin had held more than one long and apparently interesting conversation with the Marquise de Saulny. In those conversations—whether they took place in the halls, or the armoury, or on the battlements while the Marquise, with two of Marie's women, followed the young lady over the château — the Abbé, as we have said, seemed to take considerable interest : but still, from time to time, his eyes fixed upon the graceful and beautiful form of Marie de Clairvaut, or gazed earnestly upon the fair face as, beaming with the radiance of the heart, it turned from one brother to the other at every interesting point of the

conversation. In the expression of his eyes, fine, intelligent, and speaking as they were, there was something, perhaps, not altogether pleasing — a look of admiration, indeed, but a look mingled with or taking its meaning from, feelings, perhaps, not the most pure and holy. It was more like the gratified admiration of a critic, than the ordinary impression produced by beauty upon a fine mind.

However that might be, Madame de Saulny soon became aware, though she was a woman and a French woman, that the Abbé de Boisguerin, in the attentions which he paid her, was not actuated by any admiration of her own personal charms; and as she was fond of such attentions, and not very scrupulous as to any innocent means of attracting or holding them, she made Marie de Clairvaut, her personal beauty, and the high qualities of her mind and heart, one of the chief topics of her conversation with a person whom she saw was already, in a great degree, occupied with such subjects.

It may be asked, what were the real feelings

of the Abbé de Boisguerin himself? It will be fully time to dwell upon those feelings hereafter; for at the time we speak of, if there were any feelings in his bosom at all different from those which ordinarily occupied it, they were yet but as seeds in which the first green bursting forth of the germ was scarcely apparent, even to the closest inspection. It is true that he sat up for more than two hours after the young lady herself and her two noble hosts had all retired to rest. It is true that, with his arms crossed upon his chest, he walked up and down the hall, in which he was now left solitary, musing beneath the light of the untrimmed lamps, and revolving many a strange fancy and shadowy imagination in his own powerful mind. He felt that they were but fancies; but he told himself that it is often from the storehouses of imagination that strong minds draw the rich ore from which they manufacture splendid realities. Ambition finds there her materials; love his gayest robes; passion gains thence many a device for his own ends; and even science and philosophy have

often to thank imagination for many a grand discovery, for many a bright thought and happy suggestion.

As he paced up and down that hall in silence and solitude, communing with his own heart and his own mind, the consciousness of vast powers, great courage, and mighty scope of intellect, became more distinct, and clear, and potent in his own bosom. He asked himself, what, with such a mind, he might not be, if, looking on the troublous times in which he lived as a mere scene for his ambition, he were to plunge at once into the contentions of the day, and, with the sole object of his own aggrandisement in view, employ upon all things round him the mastery of superior intellect. He asked himself this; and with that thought, there might come up before his mind the thought of love likewise, the thought of passions, which have so frequently gone hand in hand with ambition, and of gratifications to be obtained by the obtainment of power.

As he thought, he paused, casting down his eyes, and they accidentally fell upon the sort

of half clerical garments that he wore. He gazed for a moment at his own dress, and then he murmured to himself, with a meaning smile, "Thank Heaven ! I have taken no vows but such as can be thrown off as easily as this garment."

CHAP. V.

THE luxury of the present age has perhaps made no greater progress than in the cultivation of flowers, and in nothing, perhaps, has it produced its usual effect, of depriving men of the sweet zest of simplicity, more than in our enjoyment of those sweetest of the earth's children. Heaven forbid that we should lose any of the many bright and beautiful blossoms which have been added so abundantly to our stock within the last few years: having possessed them, we cannot lose them without pain; and, perhaps, in the very variety we receive a compensation for the something that is lost. But yet there can be no doubt that in the present day we do not feel the same keen pleasure and enjoyment in our gardens thronging with ten thousand flowers which men did in those old

days, when few but the native plants of the soil had yet received cultivation.

At the time that we are now speaking of, the attention of men in general was first strongly turned in France to the cultivation of their gardens; and Du Bellay, Bishop of Mans, was about that very period importing from foreign countries multitudes of those plants which are in general supposed to be indigenous to the country. One of the first efforts in the art of gardening had been to multiply those shrubs, which, though not, as generally supposed, indeciduous, retain their leaves and their colouring through the colder parts of the year, and cover the frozen limbs of winter with the green garmenture of the spring. Amongst the next efforts that took place, were those directed to the production of flowers and fruits at seasons of the year when they are denied to us by the common course of nature; and any little miracles of this sort, which from day to day were achieved, gave a greater degree of pleasure than we can probably conceive at this time, when such things are of daily occurrence.

In passing round the battlements of the castle, as we have described in the last chapter, Marie de Clairvaut had remarked a considerable garden within the walls of the château itself. She had seen the rows of the neatly clipped yew, and the green holly, and she had thought that she could discover here and there a flower, even in the midst of that ungenial season of the year. How it happened, or why, matters not, but upon the third morning of her stay, she woke at a far earlier hour than usual, and rising, after a vain effort to sleep again, she dressed herself without assistance; and believing that she should have no other companion but the morning sun, she proceeded to seek her way to the garden, with a feeling of pleasant expectation, which may seem strange to us in the present day, but was then quite natural to one of her disposition and habits. The garden was easily found, many of the servants of the château were up and about; and one of them with haste and care proceeded to open the gates, and unlock the doors, for the fair lady, and usher her on her way.

It were needless to enter into any description

of the garden ; for few, scanty, and poor were the flowers that it contained, even in its brightest moments, compared with those now produced in the garden of a cottage in England. At that season, too, every thing was frozen up, and the more severe frost of the preceding nights had killed even those hardy blossoms that seemed to dare the touch of their great enemy, the winter.

It was enough, however, for Marie de Clairvaut, that the plentiful rows of evergreens refreshed her eye ; and she walked along the straight alleys with a feeling of joyous refreshment, while the hoar-frost upon the grass crackled under her feet, or, catching the morning light upon the yews and hollies, melted into golden drops in the cheerful sunshine.

She hoped for half an hour of that sort of solitude, when, though there is no one near us, the heart is not solitary ; when we hold companionship with nature, and in a humble, though rejoicing spirit, converse with God in his great works.

At such moments, dear, indeed, must be the person, sweet to our heart must be our ordinary commune with them, harmonious must be their sensations with every feeling of our bosom, if we find not their coming upon us an interruption ; if we can turn from the bright face of nature to the dear aspect of human love, and feel the scene, and the companionship, and ourselves, all attuned together.

Such we cannot say was the case with Marie de Clairvaut, when, on hearing a step behind her, she turned and saw the young Marquis de Montsoreau. She felt dissappointed of her solitude; but, nevertheless, she was far too courteous in her nature to suffer such sensations to appear for a moment, and she returned his greeting with a kindly smile, and listened to his words with that degree of pleasure which the intention of being pleased is sure to carry with it. Gaspar de Montsoreau talked to her of many things, and spoke on every subject so gracefully, so clearly, and so pleasingly, that when memory brought back the conversation which she was

accustomed to hear in courts and cities, it seemed to her a sort of miracle, that wit and talent, such as those two brothers possessed, should have grown up like a beautiful flower in a desert, so far removed from any ordinary means of cultivation. She felt, too, that, on her return to Paris, a comparison of the sort of communion which she now held in the country, with the only kind of society which the capital could afford, would be very, very detrimental to the latter.

The young marquis, after the first salutation of the morning, commented on her early rising, and told her that both he and his brother had been up even before sunrise.

“Some of our people roused us,” he said, “with tidings of a large body of armed men having encamped on the preceding night at the distance of about seven leagues from Montsoreau.” And he added, that his brother had found it necessary to go forth with a small party of horse to reconnoitre this force, and ascertain its purposes and destination. He did not say, however — which he might have said — that other tidings, regarding the movements of this

body of men, had rendered it scarcely necessary to pay any particular attention to them, and that it was only in consequence of his pressing request that Charles of Montsoreau had set out upon a distant expedition, which must keep him absent during the greater part of the day from the side of Marie de Clairvaut.

On their farther conversation we must not dwell, for we wish to hurry forward as rapidly as possible towards more stirring events. Suffice it to say, that it passed pleasantly enough to the fair girl herself, and far more pleasantly, though also more dangerously, to Gaspar de Montsoreau. He sat by her side, too, during the morning meal, while the Abbé de Boisguerin occupied the chair on the other side, between herself and Madame de Saulny. The Abbé spoke little during breakfast, and left the conversation principally to the young marquis; but when he did speak there was a depth, and a power, and a profoundness in his words and thoughts, that struck Mademoiselle de Clairvaut much, commanded her attention, and excited some feelings of admiration. But it often hap-

pens, and happened in this case, that admiration is excited without much pleasure, and also without much respect.

The mind of a pure and high-souled woman is the most terrible touchstone which the conversation of any man can meet with. If there be baser matter in it, however strong and specious may be the gilding, that test is sure to discover it. We mistake greatly, I am sure, when we think that the simplicity of innocence deprives us of the power of detecting evil. We may know its existence, though we do not know its particular nature, and our own purity, like Ithuriel's spear, detect the demon under whatever shape he lurks.

Thus, while Marie de Clairvaut turned from time to time, struck and surprised, towards the Abbé de Boisguerin, when he broke forth for a moment with some sudden burst of eloquence, there came every now and then upon her mind a doubt as to the sincerity of all he said—a doubt of its being wholly true. That the great part was as true as it was beautifully expressed, she did not

doubt; but it seemed to her as if there was frequently some small portion of what was doubtful, if not of what was absolutely wrong, in what he said. She tried to detect where it was, but in vain. It became a phantom as soon as ever she strove to grasp it; and though at times she seemed to shrink from him with doubts of his character, which she could not define nor account for, at other times she reproached herself for such feelings; and thinking of the two noble and high-spirited young men, whose education he had conducted with so much skill, wisdom, and integrity, she felt it difficult to believe that his own nature was any thing but upright, noble, and just. She knew not, or recollected not, that the children of darkness are, in their generation, wiser than the children of light, and saw not that it had been the policy and first interest of the Abbé de Boisguerin to acquit himself of the task he had undertaken in the most careful and upright manner.

The greater part of the day passed over much as the preceding one had done, with merely this difference, that the Marquis, aided by the Abbé,

persuaded his fair guest to wander forth for a short time beyond the immediate walls of the château; assuring her, that as his brother was out scouring the country, and the peasantry all round prepared to bring intelligence to the castle rapidly, no danger could approach without full time for escape and defence. The Marquis and the Abbé accompanied her on either side, and a considerable train of servants followed, so that Marie de Clairvaut felt herself in perfect security.

Nevertheless, the ramble did not seem so pleasing to her as it might have been. Neither, to say the truth, did it appear to afford the young nobleman himself the pleasure which he had anticipated. For the first time, perhaps, in his life, the society and the conversation of the Abbé de Boisguerin irritated and made him impatient. He himself became often silent and moody; and after a time the Abbé seemed to note his impatience, and divine the cause, for with one of his own peculiar slight smiles, he betook himself to the side of the Marquise de Saulny, and left Gaspar de Montsoreau to en-

ertain his fair guest without listeners or interruption.

The young lord's equanimity, however, had been overthrown; it was some time ere he could regain it; and just as he was so doing, and the conversation was becoming both more animated and more pleasing between him and Marie de Clairvaut, his brother Charles was seen coming rapidly over the hill, at the head of his gallant troop of horsemen, with grace, and ease, and power in every line of his figure, the light of high spirit and of chivalry breathing from every feature of his face, and every movement of his person.

His keen eye instantly caught the party from the château, and turning his horse that way, he sprang to the ground by Mademoiselle de Clairvaut's side, and gave her the good morrow with frank and manly courtesy. He said little of his expedition, except to laugh at the unnecessary trouble he had taken, the band of men whom he had gone out to reconnoitre proving to be a troop of Catholic soldiers, in the service of the King of France. He

showed no ill humour, however, towards his brother, for having pressed him to undertake a useless enterprise, when, undoubtedly, he would have preferred being by the side of Marie de Clairvaut. But the smiles with which she received him proved a sufficient recompense; and he now applied himself to make up for lost time, by enjoying her conversation as much as possible during the rest of the evening, without observing that his brother appeared to be out of humour, and not very well satisfied with the attentions that he paid her.

The first thing that at all roused him from this sort of unconsciousness, was a sudden exclamation of the Marquis towards the close of the evening, when he was performing some little act of ceremonious courtesy towards their fair guest.

“Why, Charles,” he exclaimed, “one would think that you were the Lord of Montsoreau, you do the honours of the place so habitually.”

Charles of Montsoreau had never heard such words from his brother’s lips before. He started, turned pale, and gazed with a silent glance of

inquiry in his brother's face. But he made no reply, and fell into a fit of deep thought, which lasted till the party separated, and they retired to rest.

Marie de Clairvaut had remarked those words also, and she felt pained and grieved. She was not a person to believe, on the slightest indication of her society being agreeable to any man she met with, that he must be necessarily in the high road to become her lover. She knew, she felt, that it was perfectly possible to be much pleased with, to be fond of, to seek companionship with, a person of the other sex, without one other feeling, without one other wish, than those comprised within the simple name of friendship. She, therefore, did not know, and would not fancy, that there was any thing like love towards herself springing up so soon in the bosom of Gaspar de Montsoreau. But she did see, and saw evidently, that he sought to monopolise her conversation and her society, and was displeased when any one shared them with him. It made her uneasy to see this, for, to say the truth, the conversation, the manners, the countenance, of

his younger brother, were all more pleasing to her—not that she felt the slightest inclination to fall in love with Charles of Montsoreau, or ever dreamt of such a thing. But, as we have before said, if she had a preference, it was for him.

Nor was that preference a little increased by the manner in which he bore his brother's conduct. He became more silent and thoughtful: there was an air of melancholy, if not of sadness, came upon him from the very moment Gaspar spoke those words, which struck Marie de Clairvaut very much. He showed not, indeed, the slightest ill humour, the slightest change of affection towards his brother. He seemed mortified and grieved, but not in the least angry; and during the ensuing days bore with a kindly dignity many a little mark of irritation, on his brother's part, which evidently gave him pain.

“It is a sad thing to be a younger brother,” thought Marie de Clairvaut—“perhaps left entirely dependent upon the elder.”

But that very night it happened that Madame

de Saulny informed her that Charles of Montsoreau was, in his own right, Count of Logères, and considerably superior to his brother, both in power and wealth. It need hardly be said that her esteem for himself, and her admiration of his conduct, rose from a knowledge of the circumstances under which it was displayed; and she could not help, by her manner and demeanour towards him, marking how much she was pleased and interested. She gave him no cause to believe, indeed, that the interest which she did feel went beyond the point of simple friendship. But a very slight change in her demeanour was sufficient to mark her feelings distinctly; for her character and her habits of thought and feeling at that time were peculiar, and affected, or we may say regulated, her whole behaviour in society.

As yet, she knew not in the slightest degree what love is; and though, in her heart, there were all the materials for strong, deep, passionate attachment of the warmest and the most ardent kind, still those materials had never been touched by any fire, and they lay cold and

inactive, so that she believed herself utterly incapable of so loving any being upon earth, as man must be loved for happiness. From a very early age she had made up her mind, when permitted, to enter a convent; and though neither of her uncles would consent to her so doing, yet she adhered to her resolution, and only delayed its execution. She knew that at that time, and she believed it would ever be so, that all her hopes and affections were turned towards a higher Being; and these feelings in some degree against her will, gave a degree of shrinking coldness to her demeanour when in the society of men, which made the slightest warmth of manner remarkable. The exquisite lines of Andrew Marvell upon the drop of dew might well have been applied to her general demeanour in the world:—

“ See how the orient dew,
Shed from the bosom of the morn
Into the blowing roses,
Yet careless of its mansion new
For the clear region where ’twas born,
It in itself encloses,
And in its little globe’s extent
Frames as it can its native element.

How it the purple flower does slight !
Scarce touching where it lies,
But, gazing back upon the skies,
Shines with a mournful light,
Like their own tear,
Because so long divided from the sphere.
Restless it rolls and insecure,
Trembling lest it grow impure,
Till the warm sun pities its pain,
And to the skies exhales it back again."

Notwithstanding the words of his brother, and the impatience which Gaspar more than once displayed, Charles of Montsoreau changed his conduct not in the slightest degree towards Marie de Clairvaut. He was kind, attentive, courteous, evidently fond of her conversation and society ; and more than once, when he was seated at some distance, while she was talking with others, she accidentally caught his eyes fixed upon her with a calm, intense, and melancholy gaze, which interested and even confused her.

The conduct of the elder brother, however, gave her some degree of pain. He was always perfectly courteous and kind, indeed, but there was a warmth and an eagerness in his manner

which alarmed her. She was afraid of fancying herself beloved when she was not; she was afraid of having to reproach herself with vanity and idle conceit, and yet a thousand times a day she wished she had not stayed at the château of Montsoreau; for she saw evidently that she had been the cause of pain, and she feared that she might be the cause of more. In one thing, however, she could not well be mistaken, which was, that the Marquis found frequent pretexts, and not the most ingenuous ones either, for inducing his brother to absent himself from the château. Charles yielded readily; but Marie de Clairvaut saw that it was not willingly; and once, when he consented to go to a town at some distance, which was proposed to him with scarcely any reasonable cause, she saw a slight smile come upon his lips, but so sad, so melancholy, that it made her heart ache.

In the mean while the weather had turned finer; the frost had disappeared; some of the bright days which occasionally cheer the end of February had come in; the country immediately

around was ascertained to be in a state of perfect tranquillity; and Marie readily consented to ride and walk daily through the environs, knowing that on these excursions, accompanied by her woman and Madame de Saulny, she was thrown less into the society of Gaspar of Montsoreau than while sitting alone at the château. On one occasion of this kind, when the morning was peculiarly bright, and the day happy and genial, it had been proposed to bring forth the falcons, who had not stirred their wings for many a day, as several herons had been heard of by the river since the thaw had come on.

An hour or two before the appointed time, however, intelligence was brought to the castle, which proved afterwards to be fabricated, that a neighbouring baron of small importance had gone over to the party of the King of Navarre.

Gaspar of Montsoreau seized the pretext, and endeavoured to persuade his brother to visit that part of the country, and ascertain the facts. But, for once, Charles of Montsoreau positively refused, and his air was so grave and stern, that his brother did not press it farther.

Gaspar was out of temper, however, and he showed it; and finding that Charles kept close to the bridle rein of Marie de Clairvaut, he affected to ride at a distance, with a discontented air, giving directions to the falconers, and venting his impatience in harsh and angry words when any little accident or mistake took place. No heron was found for nearly an hour; and he was in the act of declaring that it was useless to try any farther, and they had better go back, when a bird was started from the long reeds, and the jesses of the falcons were slipped.

Marie de Clairvaut had been conversing throughout the morning with Charles of Montsoreau—conversing on subjects and in a manner which drew the ties of friendship and intimacy nearer round the heart—and it so happened that the moment before the heron rose, she remarked, in a low tone, “Your brother seems angry this morning; something seems to have displeased him.”

“Oh, dear lady,” replied the young nobleman, “I pray you do not judge of Gaspar by what you have seen within these last few days.

I fear that he is either ill, or more deeply grieved about something than he suffers me to know. He is of a kindly, affectionate, and gentle disposition, lady, and from childhood up to manhood, I can most solemnly assure you, I never yet saw his temper ruffled as it seems now."

Marie de Clairvaut raised her eyes to his face with a look full of sweet approbation; and she said, "I wish you would just ride up to him, and try to calm him. Why should he not come near us, and behave as usual?"

Charles of Montsoreau turned instantly to obey, merely saying, "Keep a tight rein on your horse, dear lady, till I come back, for he is somewhat fiery."

He had just reached his brother's side when the heron took wing; and Gaspar de Montsoreau glad of an opportunity of marking his discontent towards his brother, spurred on his horse with an angry "Pshaw!" and galloped after the falcons as fast as possible.

In an instant every bridle was let loose, every face turned towards the sky, every horse

at full speed. We must except, indeed, Charles of Montsoreau, for his first thought was of Marie de Clairvaut. His mind had been greatly depressed during the morning: he had thought much of her; he had felt a vague impression that some accident would happen to her; and though he had endeavoured to laugh at himself for giving way to such a feeling, yet the feeling had remained so strongly as to make him refuse to go upon the expedition which his brother had proposed to him. He turned then his horse rapidly to the spot where he had left her; but she was no longer there.

“The lady has gone on at full speed, Count Charles,” cried the voice of Gondrin, the huntsman: “That way, sir, that way, to the right. It seems as if she knew the country well, and was sure the heron would take back again to the river.”

Charles of Montsoreau spurred on at full speed in the direction pointed out; but, from the woody nature of the ground, it was some time before he caught even a glance of the horse that bore the lady. That glance was intercepted im-

mediately by fresh trees and low bushes of osiers, and all that he could see was, that there was nobody with her, and that her horse was at full speed. The country was difficult, the road dangerous from numerous breaks and cuts. To set off at such a pace and alone, seemed to him unlike the calm, sweet character of Mademoiselle de Clairvaut; and he heard, or fancied he heard, sounding as from the path before him, a cry, lost in the whoops and halloos of those who were following the flight of the birds along the stream.

The sport was forgotten in a moment: he spurred vehemently on upon the road which Marie de Clairvaut had taken, while almost all the rest of the people in the field crossed the stream by a bridge to the left, and pursued the flight of the birds across a meadow round which the river circled before it took a sharp turn to the right. All the more eagerly did the young nobleman spur forward, knowing that about a quarter of a mile in advance the path which he followed separated into two, and that he might lose sight of the fair

girl altogether if he did not overtake her before she reached the point of separation.

When he arrived at it, however, she was not to be seen; but one glance at the ground showed him the deep footmarks of the jennet following the road to the right, which led far away from the point towards which the heron seemed to have directed its flight, and to a dangerous part of the river about a mile beyond. He now urged his horse on vehemently — furiously.

The road wound in and out round the lower projections of the hill, and through the thinner part of the forest that skirted its base; but though he, who was generally tender and kind to every thing that fell beneath his care, now dyed the rowels of his spurs in blood from his horse's sides, he came not up with the swift jennet which carried Mademoiselle de Clairvaut. He gradually caught the sound of its feet, indeed; and the sound became more and more distinct, showing that he gained upon it.

But this slight success in the headlong race which he was pursuing was not enough to calm the mind of the young cavalier. It was now

evident that the horse, frightened by the whoop and halloo of the falconers, had run away with its fair burden; and every step that they advanced brought the horses and their riders nearer to a part of the river which was only to be passed in the hottest and driest days of summer, and then with difficulty.

Oh, how the heart of Charles of Montsoreau beat when, at the distance of about a hundred yards from the brink of the river, the trees began to break away, and left the ground somewhat more open. But before he could see any thing distinctly but a figure passing like lightning across the distant bolls of the trees, he heard a loud scream, and a sudden plunge into the water, and then another loud shriek.

He galloped to the very brink, so that his horse's feet dashed the stones from the top of the high bank into the water, and then he gazed with a glance of agony upon the stream. The sleeve of a velvet robe and a hawking-glove rose to the surface of the water.

He cast down the rein — he sprang from his

horse — he plunged at once from the bank into the stream — he dived at the spot where he had seen the glove, and, in a moment, his arms were round the object of his search. At that instant he would have given rank, and station, and all his wide domains, to have felt her clasp him with that convulsive grasp which sometimes proves fatal to both under such circumstances.

But she remained still and calm; and bearing her rapidly to the surface, and then to the lower part of the bank, he laid her down upon the turf, and gazed for an instant on her fair face. Oh, how deep, and terrible, and indescribable was the pain that he felt at that moment. Sensations that he knew not to be in his heart — that he did not — that he would not before believe to exist therein — now rushed upon him, to fill up the cup of agony and sorrow to the brim; and, kneeling beside the form of the beautiful girl he had just borne from the dark tomb of the waters, he unclasped her garments, he chafed her hands, he raised her head, he did all that he could think of to recall her to animation; and then, pressing her wildly to his bosom,

while unwonted tears came rapidly into his eyes, he called her by every tender and endearing name, adding still, "She is dead! she is dead!"

As he did so, as she was pressed most closely and most fondly to his heart, as her hand was clasped in his, as her head leaned upon his shoulder, he thought he felt that hand press slightly on his own; he thought he felt the pulse of life beat in her temples. He lifted his head for a moment — her eyes were open and fixed upon him. The colour was coming back into her cheek. She spoke not, she made no effort to escape from the embrace in which he held her: but it was evident that she marked his actions, and heard his words; and if any thing had been wanting to tell her how dear she was to his heart, it would have been the joy, the almost frantic joy, with which he beheld the signs of returning consciousness. Eagerly, actively, however, he ceased not to give her whatever assistance he could, and then bent over her again to lift her in his arms, saying, "Forgive me, forgive me! But I will carry you to a cot-

tage not far off, where you can have better tending."

She raised her arm, however, and took his hand kindly in hers, making him a sign to bend down his head.

"A thousand thanks," she said in a low voice; "but I am not so ill as you suppose. I foolishly fainted with terror when the horse plunged over, and I remember nothing from that moment till just now. But I feel I shall soon be better."

It was not a moment in which Charles of Montsoreau could put much restraint upon himself, for joy succeeding terror had already displayed so much of the real feelings of his heart, that any attempt at concealment must have been vain. He gave not way, indeed, to the same ebullitions of feeling which he had before suffered to appear, while he thought her dead; but every word and every action told the same tale. He gazed eagerly, tenderly, joyfully in her eyes; he chafed the small hands in his own; he wrung out the water from the beautiful hair; he smoothed it back from the fair fore-

head ; and he did it all with words of tenderness and affection, that could not be mistaken. Thus kneeling by her side, he again besought her to let him carry her to the nearest cottage ; but she pointed to the small hunting horn which hung at his side, asking, “ Will not that bring some one ? ”

He was not called upon to use it, however, for before he could raise it to his lips, the sound of a horse’s feet was heard coming from the same path which they themselves had pursued ; and in a moment after, the good forester Gondrin emerged from the wood, with no slight anxiety on his frank and honest countenance. His young lord supporting Marie de Clairvaut as she lay partly stretched upon the ground, partly resting on his arm, with the count’s horse cropping the herbage close by, instantly caught his attention, and riding up with prompt and unquestioning alacrity, he gave every assistance in his power, seeming to comprehend the whole without any explanation. His own cloak and doublet were instantly stripped off, to wrap the chilled limbs of the fair girl who lay before him,

and scarcely five words were spoken between him and his master. They were : “ Bourgeois’ cottage is close by, my lord : shall we carry her there ? ” — “ Is it nearer than Henriot’s ? ” — “ Oh, by a quarter of a mile. ” — “ There, then, there. ”

But without suffering the forester to give him any assistance in carrying her, the young lord raised Marie de Clairvaut in his arms, and bore her on into the wood, looking down in her face from time to time, with a smile, as if to tell her how easy and how joyful was the task.

Gondrin followed, leading the horses ; but as he came on, he asked, in a low voice, “ Where is the jennet, Sir ? ”

“ Drowned, I fancy, ” replied Charles of Montsoreau — “ drowned, and no great loss, after such doings as to-day. ”

The cottage was soon gained, and there every assistance was procured for Marie de Clairvaut, which was necessary to restore fully the diminished powers of life. A sort of hand litter was speedily formed ; some of the peasantry procured as bearers ; and, stretched thereon,

dressed in the coarse, but warm and dry habiliments of a country girl; the beautiful child of the lordly house of Guise was borne back towards the château of Montsoreau with him who had rescued her from a watery grave, gazing down upon her, and thinking that she looked even more lovely in that humble attire than in the garb of her own station.

As they approached the château, horns, and whoops, and shouts made themselves heard; and it was evident that the absence of the young lord and the fair guest had at length been remarked by other than the careful eye of Gondrin. Horseman after horseman came up one by one, and at length Gaspar himself appeared with Madame de Saulny and one of Mademoiselle de Clairvaut's women, who had followed her mistress to the field; but, as was common with women of all classes in those days, had forgotten every thing but the falcons and their quarry, the moment that the birds took wing.*

* So extraordinary and remarkable was the passion for falconry amongst the women of that day, that Catherine de Medici herself, engaged as she was in all the wiles of policy

A multitude of questions and exclamations now took place; and without suffering the bearers of the litter to stop, Charles explained in few words what had occurred, dwelling upon the peril which their fair guest had been in, and merely adding, that he had been fortunate enough to arrive in time to rescue her from the water.

The brow of Gaspar de Montsoreau grew as dark as night, and forgetting that, in his ill humour, he had voluntarily quitted her side, he muttered to himself, "There seems a fate in it, that he should render her every service, and I none."

He sprang off from his horse, however, and walked forward on the other side of the litter,

during her whole life, found time to pursue this sport day after day, and had courage enough to follow it after having not only received several severe falls, but after having once broken her leg and once fractured her skull, by the imprudent habit of galloping at full speed after the birds, with the eyes fixed upon them, and inattentive to every thing else. The moment that the falcons were flown, every thing on earth was forgotten, and the most serious accidents were of daily occurrence.

addressing all sorts of courteous speeches to Marie de Clairvaut, who was now well enough to reply. Madame de Saulny, however, had no great difficulty in persuading her to retire at once to bed: not that she felt any corporeal disability to sit up through the rest of the day; but her mind had many matters for contemplation, and she insisted upon being left quite alone, with no farther attendance than that of one of her women stationed in the ante-room.

CHAP. VI.

THE windows were half closed, the room was silent, no sound reached the ear of Marie de Clairvaut, but the sweet wintry song of a robin perched upon the castle wall. Her first thoughts were of gratitude to Heaven for her escape from death, her next, of gratitude to him who had risked his life to save her. But after that came somewhat anxious and troublous thoughts.

She recollected the moment when she woke to consciousness, and found herself clasped in his arms, with his heart beating against her bosom, with his cheek touching hers; she recollected that he had unclasped the collar round her neck; that he had chafed and warmed her hands in his; that he had dried her hair; that he had braided it back from her forehead; that he had borne her in his arms close to his heart: she recollected that her own hand, from the impulse

of her heart, had pressed his; and that she herself had felt happy while resting on his bosom.

As she thought of all these things, so different from any of the ideas that usually filled her mind, the warm blood rose in her cheek, though no one could see her; and turning round, she buried her eyes in the pillow with feelings of ingenuous shame; and yet even then the image of Charles of Montsoreau rose before her. She saw him, as she had beheld him when first they met, galloping down to aid her attendants in her defence; she saw him pointing the cannon of the castle against her pursuers; she saw him bearing with calm dignity the ill humour of his brother; she saw him, with passionate tenderness and grief, bending over her, and weeping when he thought her dead. She saw all this, and a consciousness came over her that there was no other being on all the earth on whose bosom she could rest with such happiness as on his.

Nor did love want the advocates of nature and reason to support his cause. First came the thought of gratitude: she was grateful to

God as the great cause of her deliverance ; but ought she not to be grateful to him also, she asked herself, who was indeed — as every other human being is — an agent in the hand of the Almighty, but who was carried forward to that agency by every kindly, noble, and generous feeling, the contempt of danger and of death, and all those sensations and impulses which show most clearly the divinity that stirs within us ?

In being grateful to him, she felt that she was grateful to God ; and it was easy for Marie de Clairvaut to believe that such gratitude should only be bounded by the vast extent of the service rendered.

She did not exactly, in clear and distinct terms, ask herself whether she could refuse to devote to him the life that he had saved ; but her heart answered the same question indirectly, and she thought that she could have no right to refuse him any thing that he might choose to ask as the recompense of the great benefit which he had conferred.

What might he not ask ? was her next ques-

tion ; and then came back the memory of every look which she had seen, of every word which she had heard, at the moment when she was just recovering ; and those memories at once told her what he might and would seek as his guerdon. Was it painful for her to think that he might even crave herself as the boon ? — Oh no ! A week before, indeed, she would have shrunk from the very idea with pain. The only alternative she could have seen would have been to be miserable herself, or to make him miserable.

Now such feelings were all changed and gone ; and Marie de Clairvaut — having entertained those feelings sincerely, candidly, and without the slightest affectation — might feel surprised, and, perhaps, a little alarmed, at the change within herself ; but she was by no means one to cling with any degree of pride or vanity to thoughts and purposes that were changed.

It is true that those thoughts and purposes had been changing gradually towards Charles of Montsoreau. But it was the events of that day which suddenly and strangely had com-

pleted the alteration. The near approach of death—the plunge, as it were, into the jaws of the grave, from which she had been rescued as by a miracle—had seemed to waken in her new sensations towards all the warm relationships of life, a clinging to her kindred beings of the world, a tenderer, a nearer affection for the thrilling ties of human life.

Then again, as regarded her young deliverer, and that near familiarity, from which the habit of her thoughts and the coldness of a heart unenlightened by love, had made her hitherto shrink with something more than maiden modesty:—in regard to these, her feelings had been suddenly and entirely changed by the circumstances in which she had been placed. It seemed as if to him, and for him, the first of all those icy barriers had been broken down, and was cast away for ever. She had been clasped in his arms—she had been pressed to his bosom—the warmth of his breath seemed still to play upon her cheek—her hand seemed still grasped in his; and when her mind returned to those ideas, after more than an hour

of solitary thought, the memories — which at first had called the blood into her cheek, and made her hide her eyes for shame — were sweet and consoling. She thought that it was well to be thus — that it was well, as she could not but consent out of mere gratitude, to be the wife of Charles of Montsoreau if he sought her hand, that he should be the only man she could have ever made up her mind to wed; and that she could wed him with happiness.

Such was the character of the thoughts that occupied her during the rest of the day. Her mind might, indeed, turn from time to time to her relations of the lordly house of Guise, and she might inquire what would be their opinion in regard to her marriage with the young Count of Logères. The first time that she thus questioned herself, she was somewhat startled to find that she entertained some apprehensions of opposition, for those apprehensions showed her, more than aught else had done before, how entirely changed her feelings were towards Charles of Montsoreau. They made her feel that it was no longer a mere cold consent she

had to give to her marriage with him; but that it was a hope and expectation which would be painful to lose.

The apprehensions themselves soon died away: she remembered the anxiety of both the Duke of Guise and the Duke of Mayenne that she should give her hand to some one, and she remembered, also, the half angry, half jesting remonstrances of both on her declaring her intention of entering a convent. She called to mind how they had urged her, some eight months before, to make a choice, representing to her that it was needful for their family to strengthen itself by every possible tie, and promising in no degree to thwart her inclinations if she chose one who would attach himself to them.

From the words of admiration and respect which she had more than once heard Charles of Montsoreau employ in speaking of her uncles, she doubted not that the only condition which they had made, would be easily fulfilled in his case; and thus she lay in calm thought, her fancy more busy than ever it had been before,

and new but happy feelings in her heart, agitating her, certainly, but gently and sweetly. Glad visions, growing up one by one as she grew more familiar with such contemplations, came up to gild the future days — visions of peace, and home, and happiness — while the blessed blindness of our mortal being shut out from her sight the pangs, the cares, the horrors, the sorrows into which she was about to plunge.

She was like some traveller bewildered in a mountain mist, fancying that he sees before him the clear road to bright and smiling lands, when his footsteps are on the edge of the precipice that is to swallow him up.

When she rose and left her chamber, on the following morning, Marie de Clairvaut was greeted with glad smiles from every one. Perhaps her fair cheek was a little paler than ordinary, perhaps her bright eye was softer and less lustrous: but the change proceeded not from the consequences of either the fear or the danger she had undergone the day before. The slight paleness of the cheek, the slight languor

of the eye, and the night without sleep, which gave rise to both, had a sweeter cause in bright and happy thoughts which had shaken the soft burden of slumber from her eyelids.

All present gazed upon her with interest. Madame de Saulny was loud in her gratulations; Gaspar de Montsoreau himself showed a brow without a cloud, and his brother smiled brightly with scarcely a shadow of melancholy left upon his countenance. Her first act was to repeat the thanks which she had given to the latter on the preceding day—to repeat them warmly, tenderly, and enthusiastically; and Gaspar de Montsoreau, who loved not to hear such words, or see such looks upon her countenance, turned towards one of the windows, and spoke eagerly with the Abbé de Boisguerin, while wise Madame de Saulny drew a few steps back, and gave some orders to one of Marie's attendants.

“Do not thank me, sweet Marie,” said Charles of Montsoreau, as soon as he saw that he could speak unnoticed by any other ears but her own: “I have not an opportunity of

answering you now, as I ought to answer you. After my return this evening I shall seek to be heard for a few moments, for I have matter for your private ear."

He saw the warm blood coming up into her cheek, and her eyes cast down, and he added, "I have to excuse part of my conduct yesterday — I have to see if you will forgive me."

"Forgive you!" she exclaimed, raising her bright eyes to his, and speaking eagerly, though low, "Oh, there is nothing in any part of your conduct to forgive — every thing to be grateful for; whether your devotion and courage in saving me from death — or your care and tenderness," she added in a still lower voice, "after you had saved me."

The eyes of Gaspar de Montsoreau were upon them both; he marked the downcast look, the rising colour in Marie de Clairvaut's cheek; he marked the sudden raising of her eyes, and the tender light with which they looked in the face of her young deliverer. He marked the beaming expression of joy and gratitude that came over his brother's countenance, and it was

scarcely possible for him to restrain the fiery feelings in his own bosom, and prevent himself from rushing like a madman between them. Two or three low deep-toned words from the Abbé, however, recalled him to himself, and advancing with a graceful, though a somewhat agitated air, he offered Mademoiselle de Clairvaut his hand to conduct her to the hall where the morning meal was prepared.

“We are somewhat earlier than usual this morning,” he said, “because my fair brother, with our noble and excellent friend the Abbé here, have a long ride before them, to visit a relation who we hear is sick.”

“And do you not go yourself, my lord?” demanded Marie. “Pray let not my being in the château act as any restraint upon you.”

“Oh no,” replied the Marquis; “it is as well that one of us should remain here in these troublous times; and this relation, this Count de Morly, is an old man in his eightieth year, who may well expect that health should fail, ay, and life too.”

“Ay,” said Marie; “but I should think

that at that period, when life itself is fleeting away from us, and almost all the bright things of this existence are gone, any signs of human friendship, and tenderness, and affection, must be a thousand fold more dear and cheering, more valuable in every way, than when the energetic powers of life are at their full. Then we want few companionships, for we are sufficient to ourselves: but in the winter of our age, close by the icy tomb, the warmth of human affection is all that we have to cheer us; the voice of friendship, like the song of a spring bird in the chill months of the early year, must seem prophetic of a brighter season, when the cold days of earth are passed, and all glad sounds and happy sights shall be renewed in a fresh summer. Oh, the tongue of youth and health, speaking friendly sounds to the ear of sickness and age, must be the last, the brightest, the sweetest of all things which can smooth the soul's passage to eternity!"

There was an implied reproof in the words of Marie de Clairvaut, which was not pleasant to the ear of Gaspar de Montsoreau; but it did

not in any degree alter his purpose ; and merely saying that, if possible, he would go on the following day, he led his fair guest on to the hall, and gladly saw the meal concluded, and his brother quit the table with the Abbé to proceed upon their way.

As soon as they were gone, a burden seemed off his mind ; he became gay, and bright, and pleasing ; and his conversation resumed its usual tone. The stores of his mind once put forth, and there were sufficient indications of kind and generous feelings to give his society that charm without which all other attractions are poor—the charm of the heart. Towards Marie de Clairvaut his manner assumed a warmth and a tenderness which alarmed and pained her ; and with the new insight into her own heart, which she had obtained, she was enabled at once to decide upon her conduct towards him. She remained in conversation, indeed, for some time after breakfast, and though grave and serious, was by no means repulsive ; but anxious to avoid any private communication whatsoever with the young Marquis, no sooner did she see

Madame de Saulny make some movement as if about to quit the room, than putting her arm through that of her relation, she said, "Come, ma bonne de Saulny, I want to have a long conversation with you, and after that I think I shall lie down and rest for an hour or two, for I am much fatigued."

Madame de Saulny accompanied her to her apartments, leaving the young Marquis of Montsoreau standing in moody silence in the midst of the hall; and when, some hours afterwards, he sent up to inquire if Mademoiselle de Clairvaut would not go forth to see some game taken in the nets, the reply given by one of her maids in the anteroom was, that finding herself somewhat indisposed, she had lain down to rest, and was asleep. At this answer he broke away with an expression of bitter anger, and mounting his horse, rode out with a furious pace.

He had been gone about an hour and a half, when Marie came down into the room which we have described as the lady's bower, accompanied by Madame de Saulny, and employed herself in somewhat listless mood with the vari-

ous occupations of a lady of that day. For a short space she plied the busy needle at the embroidery frame, and then took up the lute and played and sang ; but the music was broken, and came but by fits and starts ; and it was evident that impatient expectation marred the power of present enjoyment or occupation. At length the clattering of horses' feet was heard below, and fain would she have looked forth from the window to ascertain which of the two brothers it was that had returned. At length, however, there was a step upon the stairs, and her beating heart decided the matter in a moment. It was Charles of Montsoreau that entered: but he was deadly pale, and that apparently from no temporary cause ; for though he spoke calmly and tranquilly to Marie de Clairvaut and Madame de Saulny, the colour did not return into his cheek.

Marie, on her part, was anxious and agitated ; she spoke low, for she feared that her voice might tremble if she used a louder tone. Her eye fell beneath that of her lover, and the colour came and went in her cheek like light quivering

on the wings of a bird ; and yet she was the first to propose that they should go forth together.

“ Your brother is absent,” she said, “ and I understand sent up some time ago, while I was asleep, to ask if I would go out to see some game taken in the nets. Would it please you to go and join him ? ”

“ Much,” replied the young nobleman. “ He is not far ; I know where the nets were to be laid.”

“ Then we will walk thither,” she said : “ I fear I shall be afraid of horses for many a long day. Madame de Saulny, you will come with us, will you not ? ”

But Madame de Saulny declined ; and Charles of Montsoreau and Marie de Clairvaut went forth, followed by two of her maids, and some other attendants, at a respectful distance. The hearts of both beat even painfully ; and for some steps from the castle gates they proceeded in silence, till at length she inquired how he had found the friend he went to visit. The young nobleman replied that he feared he was dying ; and, after a few words more on that subject, the conversation again dropped.

At length, as they descended the side of the hill, Charles of Montsoreau lifted his eyes to the face of his fair companion, saying in a low tone, "I told you this morning, Mademoiselle de Clairvaut, that I should ask a few minutes' audience of you. Let me offer you my arm — nay, be not agitated, I have nothing to say which should move you. I have to apologise, as I told you, for some parts of my conduct yesterday, and to ask you to forgive me."

"Oh, I told you," she replied, "and I tell you again, that there is nothing to apologise for, nothing that I have to forgive; every thing that I have to be grateful for, every thing that will make me thankful to you through my whole life."

"Would that I could believe it were so!" replied Charles of Montsoreau. "But I remember that in the first agony of thinking you lost for ever, of thinking that bright spirit gone, that gentle heart cold, that beautiful form inanimate for ever, I gave way to transports of grief and sorrow, I spoke words, I used actions, that I neither would have dared to speak or use towards

you, if I had known that you were then living and conscious. And yet I am sure, quite sure, that you knew, and saw, and heard those words and actions ; and I fear that they may have offended you."

" Oh no, no, indeed ! " replied Marie de Clairvaut, with her eyes bent down, her hand trembling upon his arm, and the colour glowing bright in her cheek — " Oh no, no, indeed ! I did see, I did hear ; but —— "

In the course of that bright and beautiful thing called Love, very often between two beings in every respect worthy of each other there comes a moment when the very slightest touch of that pardonable hypocrisy in woman, which, from a combination of many bright and beautiful feelings, teaches her in some degree to veil or hide the passion of her heart — when the slightest touch of that hypocrisy, I say, at a moment when it should be all cast away together, and the bosom of love laid bare to the eye of love — when the slightest touch of that hypocrisy seals the misery of both for ever.

It was such a moment then with Charles of

Montsoreau and Marie de Clairvaut. She knew not all that was in his heart at that moment, she could not know it; but she knew herself beloved, and might well have acknowledged her love in return. Had she done so, had she acknowledged that her own feelings towards him had rendered the caresses which he bestowed upon what he thought her dead form easily pardonable, the passionate grief for her death deeply touching to her heart—had she done this, their course might have gone on in brightness. But she knew not all that was in his heart at that moment, she could not know it; and the first impulse was to give way to woman's habitual hypocrisy, to cast a veil over the true feelings of her heart, and to hide the timid love of her bosom till it was drawn forth by him.

“Oh no, no, indeed!” she said; “I did see, I did hear; but—I thought it was but natural grief for one under your charge and protection that you thought lost in so terrible a manner ——”

She hesitated to go on; she feared that she spoke coldly; and she thought of adding some

word or two more which might take from the chilliness of such an answer, and let her real feelings more truly appear. Before she could collect herself to do so, however, Charles of Montsoreau answered, with a deep sigh, “ You thought it was but natural, Mademoiselle de Clairvaut; you thought it was but natural; and so, indeed ——”

But as he spoke, his brother turned the angle of the little wood through which they were proceeding down the hill, and came towards them, followed by several of the huntsmen. There was a frown upon his brow, a fire in his dark eye, which Charles of Montsoreau saw and understood full well. But he met his brother calmly and steadfastly — with deep and bitter grief in his heart, it is true, but with grief which he had power over himself to conceal.

The angry feelings of the heart of Gaspar de Montsoreau were not so easily repressed, and he spoke in a tone and manner well calculated to produce angry words between himself and his brother.

“ Why, how now, Charles !” he exclaimed ;

“are you back so soon? Where is the Abbé? Montsoreau seems to possess greater attractions for you than Morly.”

“Of course,” replied Charles of Montsoreau, calmly; “but even if it did not, I should have returned in haste. The Abbé I left behind at Morly, as he has no other occupation here.”

“And you have pleasant occupation,” rejoined his brother, with a tone in which assumed courtesy but covered ill the intended sneer — “and you have pleasant occupation as squire to this fairest of all fair ladies.”

“It is, indeed, so sweet to attend upon her,” replied Charles, “that I grieve I must lose the task so soon. In consideration of various circumstances, my dear Gaspar, I find that it will be absolutely necessary for me to proceed to Logères immediately. I have lingered too long here already. My people will think that I neglect them; and I have determined to set off by dawn to-morrow morning.”

The first expression that came upon the countenance of Gaspar de Montsoreau was undoubtedly that of satisfaction; but, with the

pause of a single instant, better feelings sprang up, and he grasped his brother's hand with a look of real anxiety, exclaiming, "Good God, Charles, at this season of the year! In this disturbed state of the country! Remember, Logères is more than a hundred and fifty leagues distant!"

"If this fair lady undertook as long a journey," replied Charles of Montsoreau with a melancholy smile, "in still severer weather, merely for the sake of doing what she thought was right, should I hesitate, Gaspar? Fie; she will think us all a household of priests and friars, who go not forth but when the sun shines, and think an easterly wind excuse sufficient for not visiting the neighbouring village. I will not diminish your garrison, either, very much, my dear brother. You must give me Gondrin with me, as he comes originally from Logères; but, besides him, I shall only take my own ordinary attendants, and I will find means to fight my way through, depend upon it."

Gaspar de Montsoreau was easily reconciled to this arrangement. He still raised some objec-

tions, indeed ; but, when he looked at Marie de Clairvaut, those objections became more and more faint in their tone, and he could scarcely refrain from a gaiety so different from the gloom of the morning, as to mark painfully how little he wished for his brother's stay. Marie de Clairvaut returned to the château in sadness and grief. She knew not, indeed, to the full extent, how much the departure of Charles of Montsoreau was attributable to her own words ; but she felt that it was so, in some degree. She blamed herself more bitterly than she even deserved ; and, hastening to her own room, she locked the door, and wept long and bitterly.

After some time, she was visited by Madame de Saulny, who pressed so eagerly for admittance, that she could not refuse her. Tears were still in her eyes, and traces of those she had shed fresh upon her cheeks ; but Marie would give no explanation ; and it was not till about an hour after, when the good marquise heard of Charles of Montsoreau's intended departure for Logères, that she divined the cause of her young relation's grief.

When she did so, Madame de Saulny felt that, in some degree, she herself might have been instrumental in producing it. But it was one good trait in the character of that lady, that, if she committed an error, she was sorry for it with her whole heart, and sought to remedy it. She loved Marie de Clairvaut deeply and truly; she grieved much to see her grieve; but she hoped that there was no such great cause for grief, and that the matter might be easily remedied.

CHAP. VII.

THE conduct which, as we have seen, was pursued by Charles of Montsoreau, had not been framed alone upon the supposition that his love for Marie de Clairvaut was without return. That belief, indeed, ultimately decided his determination; but a thousand other considerations had previously led him up to a point, where it wanted but one word to change the balance in either direction.

He had set out that morning for Morly full of hope and joy. He was not, indeed, confident that he was beloved; but he was confident that Marie de Clairvaut herself saw his affection, and had done nothing to check it. From all that he knew of her himself—from all that he had heard of her—from the casual conversation of Madame de Saulny, he was very, very sure, that the conduct of

Marie de Clairvaut would have been quite different, if she had not felt a sufficient degree of regard for him, to know that love might follow if he sought it. This was quite enough to give him hope and happiness. He had, indeed, remarked his brother's ill humour upon many occasions, and he had attributed it justly to the disappointment of a desire to engross all their fair guest's conversation; but he had not the slightest idea of the eager and fiery passions that were rising up in the breast of Gaspar of Montsoreau.

When he mounted his horse, then, to visit the old Count de Morly — one who, though only distantly related to his family, had been his father's dearest friend and wisest counsellor — Charles of Montsoreau looked forward to his return in the evening, and to the audience he had craved of Marie de Clairvaut, with a heart full of joyful emotions, and with fear bearing a very small proportion to hope. There was much happiness in his whole air; but it was thoughtful happiness, and for two or three miles he rode on in silence.

His companion, the Abbé de Boisguerin, was silent too, and thoughtful, and from time to time, as they rode along, he gazed upon his former pupil with a look of contemplative earnestness, a slight frown upon his calm, cold brow, and the thin nostril raised with something between triumph and scorn in the expression. He said not a single word till he saw that Charles of Montsoreau himself began to feel his own silence strange, and looked round as if about to commence some conversation. Then, however, the Abbé spoke.

“If you are awake, Charles, he said, “I should wish some conference with you; if you are dreaming, dream on: Heaven forbid that I should disturb you, for your visions seem pleasant ones.”

“They were, dear friend,” replied Charles, with a smile; “but I can give them up for a time, in the hopes of their being realised.”

“Visions are often realised,” replied the Abbé.

“Indeed!” exclaimed Charles of Montsoreau; “you surely are jesting, my sage friend. I

thought to hear you reprove such idle fancies, and tell me that visions, however specious, were seldom, if ever, realised."

"No, far from it," replied the Abbé: "the visions of a strong, sensible, and reasoning mind like yours, Charles, are, on the contrary, very often realised; for they are seldom formed but upon some sufficient basis. But still I must have my lesson; and I will tell you, my dear Charles, that the visions which we have formed upon the best grounds, and which are consequently often realised in all their parts, are not unfrequently those productive of the utmost misery to ourselves, even when we thought them the most hopeful, the most happy. It is, Charles, that a thousand other things mingle with the realisation of our dreams, which in our dreams we dreamt not of, turning as with a fairy's wand the pure gold to dross, rendering the sweetness bitter, and changing wholesome food to poison. Look at that distant hill—the Peak of Geran—how soft, and blue, and smooth, and beautiful it looks, and yet you and I know that the small sharp stones

with which it is covered will cut, till they bleed, the feet of the person who attempts to climb it. That soft blue mountain in the distance, Charles, is as the vision of an eager mind, and the rough impracticable stony side, as the realisation of the dream itself. I would always ask every one who indulges in a vision — Have you calculated beyond all question of doubt what may be the concomitant pangs, sorrows, and evils that even probably will accompany the realisation of that which you desire? — I would ask every one this question, Charles; and I now ask you.”

“I should think, my dear friend,” replied Charles of Montsoreau, “that it would be utterly impossible for any one to answer such a question in the affirmative. The very fallibility of our human nature would prevent our doing so with truth. Good and evil must, of course, be always mingled in this world; and all that we can do is to think calmly, and endeavour to judge rationally, of that which is the best for our ultimate happiness. We must prepare ourselves to take the consequences, be they

what they may. If you ask me the question you have mentioned, I should at once reply — No, I have not calculated all even of the probable evils which might attend the realisation of the visions with which I was occupied, because my mind is not capable of discovering one half of the chances attending any future event.”

Charles spoke somewhat warmly ; for there is always a degree of bitterness to the confident mind of youth in any words that tend to shadow the bright promises of hope, and to teach us by doctrine that which we can only learn by experience, the fallacy of expectations, the mingled nature of our best pleasures, the dust and ashes of human enjoyment. The Abbé gazed upon his face for a moment ere he replied ; but then said, “ I would put my question closer to you, Charles of Montsoreau, and I will put it seriously. Have you calculated all the self-evident evils that would attend the realisation of the visions which you were pondering ? ”

“ Why, my dear Abbé,” replied Charles

with a smile, "it would seem by your serious aspect, that to-day you had turned prophet as well as preacher, could divine my thoughts, and see their results."

"I can divine your thoughts, Charles, and do," replied the Abbé; "and as it is a subject on which, however unwillingly, I must speak, I will tell you at once what these thoughts were. The results are in the hand of God, and in the hand of God alone. But I can and will show you some of the probable results."

"Nay, then," replied Charles, seeing that the Abbé spoke quite seriously, "such being the case, my dear Abbé, I need not tell you, that if you speak to me with warning, as your words imply, I will listen to you with every sort of deference. Speak, I beg you, and speak freely. Though no longer your pupil in name, I will gladly be so in reality. So now let me hear entirely what you have to say."

"Well, then, Charles," replied the Abbé, "what I have to say is this, and simply this. Your visions were of Mademoiselle de Clairvaut. You fancied that by the various services which

you have rendered her you have obtained a strong hold upon her regard, a claim even upon her hand; that she showed a fondness for your society, a degree of affection for your person, which promised you fair in every respect; and, in fact, believing — and with some degree of justice — that you yourself love her deeply, you saw every prospect of that love being gratified by obtaining hers, and ultimately, perhaps, her hand. Now, Charles, was this, or was this not, the matter in your thoughts? was this the vision upon which your mind was bent? were not these the prospects which you contemplated just now?"

"They were," replied Charles of Montsoreau; "I do not deny it."

"Well, then," replied the Abbé, "I will not now dwell for even a single moment upon difficulties, obstacles, obstructions, upon the pride of the race of Guise, upon the views of self-interest and ambition, upon the probability of their treating your love for their niece with contempt, and rejecting your proffered alliance with scorn. I will not pause for a moment on such things; but I will speak of the matter

with which we began; namely, of the probable, the self-evident evils which must attend the realisation of your hopes and wishes. Charles of Montsoreau, have you thought of your brother?"

The blood came somewhat warmly up into Charles's countenance. "I have thought of him," he replied, "most assuredly; but I have merely thought, my excellent friend, that though he might have some degree of admiration for Mademoiselle de Clairvant, yet he has neither had the opportunities, nor the occasion, if I may use the term, of feeling towards her as I do. Fate has willed it that I should be the person to aid her upon all occasions; fate has established between us links of connection which do not exist between her and Gaspar."

"But fate has not willed it," replied the Abbé sternly, "that you should love her a bit better than he does. On the contrary, Charles, fate has willed that he should love her deeply, passionately, strongly, with the whole intensity of feeling of which he is capable. This has been the will of fate, Charles of Montsoreau, and let not the selfishness of passion blind you. In

your pursuit of Marie de Clairvaut, you are the rival of your brother."

Charles of Montsoreau cast down his eyes as they rode along, and for several minutes remained in deep silence. "You mean to say," he replied at length, "that my brother is my rival, for I first loved her, I first won her regard: he strives to snatch her from me, not I from him, and why should I hesitate at the consequences? He must learn to overcome his passion, a passion which is evidently not returned. I go on with hope; and in love, thank God, at least, there is no elder brother's right to bar us from success."

"If such be your thoughts and feelings, Charles," replied the Abbé, in a slow and solemn manner, "I see no hope but strife, contention, misery — perhaps bloodshed! between two brothers, who were born to love, to succour, to support each other. And now they will draw their swords upon each other for a woman's smile."

"Heaven forbid!" exclaimed Charles of Montsoreau. "Fear not that, Abbé! My sword

shall never be drawn against my brother, were he to urge me to the utmost. But you view this matter too gravely, you deceive yourself, I am sure. In the first place, though angry, and mortified, and somewhat jealous, perhaps, that I have had opportunities of serving Mademoiselle de Clairvaut, which he has not obtained — though somewhat charmed with her beauty, and captivated with her graces — I do not, I cannot, believe that Gaspar feels that love towards her which cannot easily be conquered. He feels not, Abbé, as I feel—he cannot feel as I feel towards her.”

“ Charles, you deceive yourself,” replied the Abbé, “ nay more, you deceive yourself wilfully. Last night in the great hall, after you had retired to rest, your brother walked up and down with me in a state almost of frenzy. He told me how deeply, how passionately, he loved her ; he poured forth into the bosom which has been accustomed to receive all his thoughts, his grief, his agony, his madness itself—for I can call it nothing but madness. He spoke of you — of you, the brother of his love, the being who

has gone on nurtured with him from infancy till now without one harsh word or angry feeling between you — he spoke of you, I say, with hatred and abhorrence; he longed to imbrue his hands in your blood; he called you the destroyer of his peace, the obstacle of his happiness, the being who had driven him to wretchedness and despair.”

Charles of Montsoreau dropped the bridle on his horse's neck, and covered his eyes with his hands. “This is very terrible!” he said— “this is very terrible!”

“It is terrible,” replied the Abbé — “it is very terrible, Charles; but it is no less true. Your brother so mild, so kind-hearted as he was, is now changed by his rivalry with you, is now full of the feelings of a murderer, is now ready to become a second Cain, and slay his brother, because his offering has not found favour in the sight of the being he worships, as yours has done! Of all this you knew not, and therefore you could not judge; but when I said you were deceiving yourself wilfully, Charles, I said not so without cause. Think of what your brother

was, one bare fortnight ago — all gay, all cheerful, all good-humoured, bearing contradiction with a smile, laughing at the thought of care, putting you always in the first place before himself. See what he is now, Charles, even when restrained by the eyes of many upon him — moody, irritable, passionate, evidently abhorring the brother he so lately loved. Can this entire change have come over a man's nature, I ask you, this sad, this terrible, this blighting change, without some strong and overpowering passion? and will you tell me you do not see he loves, loves with all the intensity of an eager, a warm, a fiery heart, loves passionately, loves to madness?"

Again Charles of Montsoreau bent his eyes down upon the ground, again he remained silent for a considerable space of time; and in that space, terrible was the conflict which went on within him. At length he raised his eyes gravely, even sternly, to the face of the Abbé de Boisguerin, and demanded, "Abbé, what would you have me do?"

"It is not for me to dictate, Charles," said the Abbé, in a sad and solemn tone. "You are

your own master, you are lord of princely lands and great wealth, you are lord also of yourself. It is not for me to say what you shall do. But I can tell you, Charles of Montsoreau, what you would do if you were the same generous, noble, kind-hearted, self-denying youth that was once under my charge. You would labour zealously, constantly, firmly, to overcome a passion which can produce nothing but misery."

"What!" exclaimed Charles of Montsoreau, "and see the woman I love become the bride of my brother! What! witness their union, when she loves me rather than him! Why is this to be put upon me, Abbé? — why, when there is every right on my side, and none on his? Why am I to be the sacrifice rather than Gaspar? Why do you address these words of exhortation to me rather than to him?"

"In the first place," replied the Abbé, "what you fear — what you seem most to fear, what it would be almost too much to demand from you — never will, never can take place. Marie de Clairvaut will never be your brother's bride. She loves him not; she rather dislikes

him : that is evident. You cannot suppose, Charles, that she will ever be his. So I remove that from all consideration. You next ask me why I put the hard task on you rather than him ; why I exhort you rather than him. I will tell you, Charles ; because with you I believe exhortation will have effect ; with him it will have none. I have told you before, this passion with him is a madness. He is more violent, he is less generous, in his nature than you are, Charles ; and if you would know more, know that I have already exhorted him, and found my exhortations vain. If you persist in your passion, if you, too, do not make a great effort to conquer it, misery, agony, and bloodshed will be the consequence. The despair, the death of him who hung at the same bosom with yourself will lie heavy on your head. You, you will be more to blame than he is ; for you are acting with determinate reason and forethought, when I tell you that his reason is gone. And, moreover ——”

“ Then,” exclaimed Charles of Montsoreau, interrupting him, “ then I ought to become

a madman, too, to put myself in the right ! Abbé, your reasoning is not just ; but I understand and feel your motives, though I cannot admit your arguments — hear me, hear me out. Were my own feelings and my own happiness alone concerned, I could — yes, I think I could — sacrifice them all to my brother, if by so doing I thought I could secure his peace. But, in the first place, you do not even hold out to me the supposition that any sacrifice on my part would secure his happiness ; and, in the next place, I have to remember that there is another whose feelings and whose comfort are to be considered. Much may have passed between Mademoiselle de Clairvaut and myself to make me sure that she knows my love, and to make me hope that she returns it. And, if such be the case, I have no right to draw back a single step, nor will I for any consideration upon earth. If I love her without her loving me, I can struggle against my love, though I can never overcome it ; but if she love me too, I will trifle with her happiness for no man upon earth — no, not my brother !”

The Abbé remained silent for a moment or two ; and then replied, “ Charles, your hopes are deceiving you. Mademoiselle de Clairvaut’s feelings may be favourable to you, may be kindly ; but, believe me,” he added, and a very slight appearance of a sneering smile hung about his lip — “ but, believe me, there is no chance of your injuring her happiness by ceasing to seek her love. I speak from good authority, Charles ; as it is not two days ago, from Madame de Saulny’s own account, that Mademoiselle de Clairvaut declared her intention to be stronger than ever of going into a convent. It is very natural, my dear Charles, that you, knowing and feeling the passion in your own breast, should think it equally evident to her. Very likely you may have addressed to her words of passion and of love, displayed signs of tenderness and affection, which you think fully sufficient to convince her ; and yet she may not have the slightest idea that your feelings are any thing but those of common courtesy and kindness. You must remember, that a pure and fine-minded woman shuns the

very idea of any man being in love with her, till his absolute assurance that such is the case, leaves her no longer any room to doubt. Pure, modest, and retiring, as Mademoiselle de Clairvaut is, such, depend upon it, are her feelings; and be you perfectly sure that nothing you have done for her has been construed by her in any other light than that of common kindness and courtesy."

"I will soon know that," replied Charles of Montsoreau; "I will know that this very night; and if I find that I have been deceiving myself, I will make any sacrifice for my brother. I will quit the place; I will stand in his way no longer; although you yourself," he added bitterly, "give me no hope that, by any of the sacrifices you demand, I shall contribute in the least to my brother's happiness."

"I think," replied the Abbé, "that you will contribute greatly to the happiness of both; or, at all events, remove those causes of dissension which would have made you both miserable. Your own happiness, too, may be served in the end more than you imagine. The

obstacles to your brother's happiness will come from her, not from you. He may grow wearied of a pursuit that he finds to be fruitless ; he may conquer a passion which he sees can never be returned. Your generosity and forbearance may, in turn, have their natural effect upon his heart ; and he may learn to see with pleasure your union with her who never could be his. Thus, in fact, by making a sacrifice, you may make none ; and by seeming to abandon, may win but the more surely."

"No !" replied the young nobleman—"No, Abbé ! I will do nothing by halves. I will act upon no motives but straightforward ones. I believe that Marie de Clairvaut knows, has seen, and returns my affection. If she love me, if her happiness is implicated, nothing on earth shall make me abandon her. I will love her, and seek her unto death. But if I find that I have deceived myself ; if I learn that she has not seen and does not return my love, I will fly from her at once. To-morrow's sunset shall see me far away ; and then I will do every thing that lies in my power to contribute to my

brother's happiness. He shall be forced to say that I have laboured for his gratification and my own disappointment, though he has embittered his heart towards his brother, and suffered passion to turn the milk of our mother into gall. Let us ride on, Abbé, let us ride on: my determinations are taken. It is better to know our fate at once. I shall stay but a short time with the good Count de Morly; and I will then leave you with him, and ride back with all speed."

"Nay, my dear Charles," replied the Abbé, "I will go back with you. I cannot suffer you to tread a long road companioned by such painful thoughts as I fear you will have."

"No, no," replied Charles of Montsoreau; "I would rather go alone. I must deal with this business singly, Abbé; and, besides, some of us should stay awhile with the good count. He is your cousin as well as ours, you know; and, as he has no other relations, may leave you all his wealth."

The Abbé turned quickly round, with an inquiring and half-angry look, as if there was

something in his own bosom told him that he might find a sneer upon the countenance of his young companion. Such, however, was not the case. All was clear and calm upon the face of Charles of Montsoreau, except a melancholy smile, as if the motives which he jestingly attributed to the Abbé were too absurd for any one to believe he spoke in earnest. They conversed no more on a subject so painful as that which they had already discussed, but rode on quickly and in silence. Such had been the conversation which preceded the interview between Charles of Montsoreau and Marie de Clairvaut.

CHAP. VIII.

IT was in the grey of the dawn, that about ten horses were assembled in the court-yard of the château of Montsoreau, on the following morning. Six were saddled and bridled, as if for instant departure; and the men who stood by the sides of those six were armed up to the teeth. Steel-caps, then called salads, crowned the head of each; and long swords slung high up on the hip, with the point of the scabbard almost touching the ground, showed a preparation for desperate resistance in case of attack; while the small pistols in the girdle were accompanied by several others attached to the saddle, so as to give every man an opportunity of firing five or six shots without the necessity of pausing to reload.

The other four horses were burdened with various packages; and after the whole had been

assembled for a few minutes in the court-yard, Charles of Montsoreau himself, accompanied by his brother and the Abbé de Boisguerin, descended the steps from the great hall, while his own strong charger was led forth, together with a spare horse to be led in hand by one of the grooms.

The countenance of the young nobleman was pale as the day before, and deep emotions were certainly busy in his bosom. But his aspect was calm and collected; and he gazed round the château of his fathers, from which he was going forth, perhaps for the last time, with an air of grave and tranquil resolution, which contrasted strongly and strangely with the agitation evident on the countenance of his brother. He grasped the hand of the Abbé de Boisguerin in silence; then spoke a few words, and made a few inquiries of his attendants; and at length turning to his brother, extended his hand to him, fixing his full eyes upon his countenance, and saying, "Farewell, Gaspar!"

The Marquis pressed his hand eagerly, but he did not speak, for he was agitated in a very

terrible degree; and his brother put his foot into the stirrup, and slowly threw himself into the saddle, in a manner very different from that light and buoyant one with which he usually mounted his horse to go forth from the same walls.

As he was passing through the archway, however, something suddenly seemed to strike him; and he turned his horse round to say to his brother, "Remember my poor dog Lupo, and be kind to him, Gaspar," and his eye ran for a moment over the upper windows, at one of which the curtain was partly drawn back, though neither the hand that drew it, nor the eyes which gazed from behind it, were visible to the sight of those below.

Charles of Montsoreau turned his horse again, and rode through the archway. — "God bless you, sir!" said the warder who stood near; — "God prosper you, my noble young count," said the porter of the gates — and in another minute Charles was riding away from his home.

At the bridge across the stream, the party

which thus left the château of Montsoreau found another horseman waiting to join them on their way; no other than the blithe-looking forester, Gondrin, who, with all his earthly goods enclosed in a large pack behind him, and mounted on a powerful horse which had borne him many a mile in various forest sports, looked not a whit the less cheerful—not a whit the more depressed—at quitting the place which he had made his home for several years, than he did upon going out in the morning to track the footsteps of a boar or deer in the course of his usual occupations.

The truth is, that Gondrin was one of those men who are without attachments absolutely local. There was far more of the dog than of the cat in his nature. Where those he loved were, there was his home; and if those he loved had not been with him, he would have felt a stranger even in his birthplace. Our local attachments, indeed, are in themselves almost all made up of associations; the pleasures that we have tasted—the happy hours that we have known—the friends that we have

loved — the sports, the pastimes, the little incidents — ay, even some of the pains of life are woven by memory and association into ties to bind our affections to certain places. Our loves and our friendships almost always derive the vigour of their bonds from the present and the past together — the ties of local attachments are all found in the past.

On the present occasion, Gondrin had with him the great object of his love and admiration : his young lord, the Count of Logères. He had with him, too, in the train of his master, more than one old companion of his forest sports. Two of the under piqueurs were to follow him as soon as safe-conducts could be obtained for them, with six dogs, which were the special joy of his heart ; so that — with the abatement of a certain degree of anxiety regarding the temporal welfare of the aforesaid hounds — Gondrin was as happy as he could be ; and whether on his horse's back, or reposing in the inn-kitchen, or resting by the roadside, he considered himself just as much at home as in his cottage under the castle of Montsoreau.

He bowed low to his lord as the young nobleman came up, and would have spoken to him also with his usual frank cheerfulness, but Gondrin was as shrewd an observer of men's faces as he was of beasts' footmarks; and he saw on the countenance of Charles of Montsoreau such indubitable traces of care and thought, that he judged it better to fall back at once amongst his companions in the rear, whose gay voices and merry laughter soon showed the effect of his presence.

Of his young lord, Gondrin had judged rightly, when he thought that he was in no mood to be interrupted in pursuing the current of his own ideas. The heart of Charles of Montsoreau was too sad and sorrowful — too full of bitter memories — too full of dark anticipations — to bear any interruption with patience. He had parted from Marie de Clairvaut — he had parted from her probably for ever — he had been disappointed in his hopes of love returned — he had voluntarily sacrificed the chance of winning her — he had cast away the bright and golden opportunity — he had cast away the

delight of her society — he had left behind him the home of his infancy, a place filled with every sweet memory — he had parted, too, from his brother, the object of all his early affections, and had parted from him with feelings changed, and with a heart wounded and bleeding.

Yet on his way he was borne up by the consciousness of rectitude, and by the vigour of high resolves. He had determined resolutely and firmly, not only to put down in his bosom any vain hopes of ever obtaining the hand of her he loved, but, as far as possible, to conquer that affection — not only to leave his brother full opportunity of striving for her hand himself, but to aid, as far as it was in his power, by every exertion and by every thought, to remove all ordinary difficulties from his brother's path. He had already laid out his plans, he had already made up his mind to his course of action. He would go to Logères, he thought ; he would call out the numerous retainers which were then at his disposal ; he would take a part in the strifes of the day ; he would attach him-

self to the Princes of the house of Guise ; and he doubted not to be enabled to render such service to their cause, as to obviate all opposition, on their part, to the union of his brother with the daughter of one of the younger branches of their family.

He hoped that it might be so ; and he trusted that it might be so. He could not, indeed, deceive himself into a belief that he could wish Marie de Clairvaut to return his brother's love. That he could not do : but if his brother won that love, he could at least contribute, he thought, to his gaining her hand also ; for there was something in his bosom which told him — though they had never yet competed for any great stake — that he possessed energies and powers which would enable him to accomplish more, far more, than Gaspar could achieve in the eager strife of the world.

Such were his views, and such his determinations ; but it need hardly be said, that in forming those views and determinations, there ran through the whole web of his thoughts the dark and mournful threads of disappointment, and

care, and regret. He was gloomy then, and melancholy; and though to all who approached him, he spoke kindly — though he was ever considerate and thoughtful for their comfort, he uttered not one word uncalled for, and ever fell back into silent thought as soon as he had uttered any order or direction.

The scene through which he passed was certainly not one well calculated to dissipate gloomy thoughts. After the first four or five miles, it subsided into a flat watery country, with manifold streams and marshes, and long rows of stunted osiers and low woods seen in dim straight lines for many miles over the horizon, with nothing breaking the continuity of brown but thin white mists rising up from the dells and hollows, and looking cold, and sickly, and mysterious. The pale grey overhanging sky vouchsafed but little light to the earth; and though the sun at one period struggled to break through, his radiant countenance looked wan and faint. The road itself was heavy and tiresome for the horses, and relieved by nothing but an occasional plashy meadow; while

ever and anon a wild duck flapped heavily up from the morass, or a snipe started away at the sound of the horses' feet with a shrill, low cry.

Seldom, if ever, does it happen that the aspect of the scene through which we pass has not some effect upon us. When deeply absorbed in our own thoughts; when filled with grief, or care, or anxiety; or even when occupied altogether with thoughts of joy and happiness to come, we know not, we do not perceive the scene around us stealing into our spirit, mingling with, and giving a colouring to, all our thoughts and feelings, softening or deepening, rendering brighter or more dark, the colouring of all our affections at the moment. But still it does so: still every object that our eyes rest upon, every sound that greets our ear, has its effect upon the mood of the moment; and the sadness of Charles of Montsoreau, the dark disappointment, the bitter regret, the withering of all his hopes, the casting behind him of his home and all sweet associations, were rendered darker, more painful, more terrible than they otherwise would

have been, by the sky, which seemed to frown back the frown of fate, and by the misty prospect, as dim, as vague, as cheerless as the future of life appeared to his mind's eye.

At length, between ten and eleven o'clock, a little village presented itself; but the population was few and scanty, while a sickly shade, as if from the bad air of the place, pervaded more or less almost every countenance, and bespoke the marshy nature of the soil. In the middle of this little place, where in England would have been a village green, was an old stone cross covered with lichens, and exactly opposite to it, at the side, appeared a large stone building with a bush over the door, and written above it, "The Inn for Travellers on horseback.—Dinner at fourteen sols a head."

The horses and the servants wanted both rest and food, and Charles of Montsoreau turned in thither. He himself, however, ate nothing, and continued walking up and down before the door, musing bitterly of the future. It mattered not to the innkeeper, indeed, whether the young nobleman ate his viands or not; for though he

had a certain pride therein, he charged as much for each man that entered the doors, whether they ate or not, as if they had consumed the best of his larder; and though he would fain have bestowed the solace of his company upon the young traveller, the manner of Charles of Montsoreau, joined with a few words, soon showed him that his company would be burdensome, and he wisely desisted.

Peace and quietness, however, were not to be the portion of Charles of Montsoreau; for scarcely had the aubergiste left him to his own reflections, when a number of gay sounds made themselves heard from the other side of the village, and looking that way, the young count saw a company of itinerant musicians, who, even in that time of war and bloodshed, did not cease to practise their merry avocation, wandering in gay dresses from city to city, sometimes exposed to plunder and injury, but often strong enough and well enough armed to defend themselves, or perhaps to pillage others.

To tell the truth, these traders in sweet sounds did not altogether bear the very best of

characters; and yet, in that time of discord and tumult, when the greater part of men's time was given up to painful thoughts of self-defence, or the fierce struggles of civil contention, the wandering musicians were generally received with a glad heart to every abode, and obtained payment of some kind, either in food or money, for the temporary enjoyment they afforded.

The party which now approached consisted of two men, a woman, and a boy. The two men were ferocious-looking persons enough, with dresses of gay colours, embroidered with tinsel, and each bearing in his girdle a dagger, the meretricious ornaments of which seemed adopted for the purpose of persuading people that it was there only for show, though in reality the sharp broad blade of highly tempered steel was very well calculated to effect any murderous purpose. The woman had once, perhaps, been pretty, and she now decked out charms, blighted perhaps by vice as much as faded by time, with every ornament within her reach. The boy, however, was the personage of the group certainly the most interesting. He preceded

his brethren along the street, playing on a small pipe, from which he produced most exquisite sounds; while a small spaniel dog ran on before him, and from time to time stood upon his hind legs, much to the amusement of the children and women that followed the musicians.

The truth is, the whole band had been lodging at the other end of the village, in one of those little public houses called, in those days, *Répues*; but hearing of the arrival of a body of gay cavaliers at the larger inn, they were coming up in haste to see how many sous their music could extract from the pockets of the troop. The two elder men and the woman were pushing in at once into the auberge, without taking any note of the young Count de Logères, whom they looked upon as a mere idler at an inn-door; but the boy stopped, and, uncovering his dark curly head, gazed for a moment in the count's face, with eyes full of fire and intelligence.

He had scarcely paused a moment, however, when one of the men returning, caught him violently by the arm, exclaiming, "What are you lingering for, idle fool?" and struck

him a blow upon the face with the open hand, which left the print of his fingers upon the boy's young cheek. The boy neither wept nor complained, but stood with his hands by his sides, a dark and bitter frown upon his brow, and a flashing fire in his eye, which showed that his passive calmness proceeded from no want of indignant sensibility to the injury. The blow might very likely have been repeated, had not the man's eye, at that moment, fallen upon Charles of Montsoreau, and perceived in his countenance a look of angry indignation, while his apparel and bearing at once showed that he was superior to the party whom the musicians had met with within.

"Come in, Ignati," cried the musician, with somewhat of a foreign accent; "either play on your pipe to the gentleman here, or come and help us to sing to the company within doors."

"I will not go in," said the boy, "unless you make me; but I will sing the gentleman a song here, if he likes it."

"Ay, do, do," said the man; "sing him that Gaillard song with the chorus."

“I am in no mood, my poor boy,” said Charles of Montsoreau, “to take pleasure in your music. My heart is too sad for your gay sounds. There is something for you, however. Go in, and sing to the lighter hearts within.”

And giving him a small piece of money, he was turning away; but the boy drew closer to him, and looking up in his face with a sweet and kindly smile, pressed him to hear his music.

“Oh let me sing to you,” he said, “let me sing to you, noble gentleman. You don’t know what music can do for a sad heart. It often makes mine less heavy; and I will choose you a song, where even the gay words are sad, so that they shall not be harsh to the most sorrowful ear.”

“Well, my good boy,” replied the count, “if you must sing, let it be so; but you must expect me to listen but lightly, for I have many things to think of.”

The boy instantly laid down his pipe on a bench by the door, and lifting his two hands gracefully, which had before been clasped together, he looked up for a minute to the sky, and then began his song, as follows:—

SONG.

Gué, gué, well-a-day !
Dost thou remember brighter hours
Shining upon thy happy way,
Like morning sunshine upon dewy flowers ?

Oh, join my lay,
And with me say,
Gué, gué, well-a-day !

Gué, gué, well-a-day !
Has fortune's favour left thee
(Ebbing fast away),
Like stranded vessel by a summer sea ?

Oh, join my lay,
And with me say,
Gué, gué, well-a-day !

Gué, gué, well-a-day !
Have the eyes that once were smiling
Now learnt to stray,
Other hearts as fond as thine beguiling ?

Then join my lay,
And with me say,
Gué, gué, well-a-day !

Gué, gué, well-a-day !
Has love's blossom suffer'd blight
'Neath misfortune grey,
Like flow'rs in the frost of a wintry night ?

Oh, join my lay,
And with me say,
Gué, gué, well-a-day !

The boy's music had contrived to fix the attention of Charles of Montsoreau, and awakened

an unexpected interest in the fate of the youth, who seemed capable, not only of the mere mechanical art of singing the words of others, or, like a taught bird, whistling music by rote, but of feeling every word and every tone that he uttered. As the young nobleman looked from his face to that of the man whom he accompanied, and who sat by his side on the bench at the door, gazing at him with an affected smile upon his coarse assassin-like features, he could not but think that it must be a hard fate for that poor, sensitive-looking boy to wander on under the domination of a harsh being like that, and he almost longed to deliver him from it. He gave the boy some additional money, however, which made the man's eyes gleam ; and he was proceeding to ask some questions regarding the fate and history of the whole party, when Gondrin and the rest of the servants issued forth with the horses, and Charles of Montsoreau prepared to mount.

“ These are the vagabonds, my lord,” said Gondrin, “ who were up at the castle gates on

the day you saved Mademoiselle de Clairvaut from drowning."

"I did not see them," replied Charles of Montsoreau with some surprise—"I did not remark any one there."

"No," answered the boy with a light smile, "no, you were thinking too much of some one else."

"You must have made speed to get here before me," said Charles of Montsoreau.

"Ay, we go by paths, sir, that you cannot go on horseback," joined in the man; and we will be at the next inn gate before you to-night, if you would like to hear the boy's music again."

"Perhaps I may," replied Charles of Montsoreau; "at all events, you sha'n't go without reward."

"We will be there, we will be there," replied the man; and the Count having ascertained that the reckoning was paid, rode on upon his way.

The little incident which had broken in upon the train of his melancholy thoughts did not very long occupy his mind. "This must be a

shrewd boy," he thought, "to adapt his song so well to the circumstances; for it is clearly from what he saw at the castle gates that he judged of the nature of my feelings, and sang accordingly."

Thus thinking, he rode on, and his mind readily reverted to the darker topics which had before occupied it. When he arrived at the sleeping place, which were in those days called *Gîtes*, he found a large and comfortable inn, such as was scarcely ever to be met with in any other country but France in those days. He looked naturally for the band of musicians at the door; but it seemed that they had either forgotten their promise, or had not yet arrived; and the young count had entered the hall and commenced his supper before there was a sign of their approach.

The first thing that gave him any intimation of their coming was the sound of voices speaking sharp and angrily in the Italian language; and he thought he heard amongst them the tones of the boy uttering a few, but indignant, words of remonstrance.

Rising from the table at which he sat, the young count approached the window, and found that he was right in supposing the party of musicians had arrived. The boy was standing in the midst, and the woman, as well as the two men, were bending over him, talking to him earnestly, with vehement grimaces on the countenance of each, while the clenched fist of the elder man shaken unceasingly, though not raised even so high as his own girdle, showed that some threats were being used to the boy, in order, apparently, to drive him to something, to do which he was unwilling. Although the window was on a level with their heads, the count could not distinguish what they said, for they were now speaking low, though still eagerly. They raised their voices, indeed, almost to a scream, when they uttered some wild Italian exclamation, but it was meaningless without the context. At length, however, to the surprise of Charles of Montsoreau, the boy seemed moved by a sudden fit of rage; and lifting the hand which held his pipe, he dashed the instrument of music upon the ground, shivering it to atoms, and ex-

claiming, "Never ! never ! I will neither sing nor play a note !"

At that instant the elder man struck him a blow on the side of the head, which knocked him at once down upon the road ; and Charles of Montsoreau opening the window, leaped out, and interfered, while several of his attendants followed him from the supper room.

The faces of the Italians fell when they saw him ; and there was a sort of confused and guilty look about them, which might well have made any one of a suspicious nature believe that they had been planning no very good schemes, when the obstinacy of the boy had obstructed them.

"You treat this youth ill," said Charles of Montsoreau, frowning upon the man who had struck him. "Are you his father ?"

"No, the blessed Virgin be thanked !" exclaimed the Italian ; "his name is Carlo Ignatius Morone, though we call him Ignati. No, obstinate little brute ! he is no child of mine ! I bought him of his mother to sing and dance for us. A bad bargain I made of it too, for

he does not gain his own bread with his whims. His mother was a courtesan of Genoa."

"She was not my mother!" cried the boy in an indignant tone. My mother was dead long before that. But whatever she was, Paulina Morone was always kind to me; and she would never have sold me to you, if I had not asked her, when she had no bread to eat herself, and had given me the last crust she had to give."

"This is a sad history," said Charles of Montsoreau; "and as you say the boy does not gain his own bread, you will, doubtless, be glad enough to sell him to me, my good friend."

The man hesitated. "I don't know that exactly," he said, "noble lord. The boy can sing well, if he likes it, as you know; and he can play well both upon the pipe and the lute when he likes it and is not obstinate; and he is as active as a Basque, and can dance better than any one I ever saw. Would you like to see him dance, my lord? I'll make him dance fast enough. That I can always do with a good stout stick, though sing he won't unless he likes it."

"I wonder not at it," replied the count

“ But you shall not make him dance for me. What I wish to know is, will you sell him to me? You said you had made a bad bargain, and that he did not gain his own bread, much less repay you.”

“ Not here in the provinces, sir,” replied the man. “ But I am sure if I took him to Paris, I could make a good sum by showing him to the lords and ladies there. However, I will sell him, if I can make something by him, sooner than be burdened with him any more.”

“ What do you demand?” said Charles of Montsoreau. “ If you are moderate, perhaps I may give it to you, for I like to hear the boy sing.”

“ I will have,” said the man, “ I will have at least a hundred and fifty crowns of gold, crowns of the sun, sir, remember, or I’ll not part with the boy.”

“ That is three times as much as you gave to the Morone,” cried the boy—“ you know it is.”

“ Ay, little villain,” answered the man; “ but have I not brought you from Italy since, and fed you for more than a year?”

“And spent a fortune in cudgels too upon him,” said the woman.

Charles of Montsoreau gave her a glance of contempt, and then turned his look towards the boy, whose eyes were full of tears. The sum that was asked for him was, in fact, considerable, each gold crown being in that day worth sixty sous, and the value of money itself, as compared with produce, being about five times that which it is at present. But the young nobleman, unaccustomed to traffic in human flesh, that most odious and horrible of all the rites of Mammon, looked upon the sum to be given as a mere trifle when compared with the boy's deliverance from the hands into which he had fallen.

“Youshall have the money,” he said.—“Gondrin, bid Martin bring me the leathern bag which he carries, and I will pay the sum immediately.”

The first sensation of the Italian was joy, at having over-reached the young French nobleman, the second was equally natural to the people, and the class to which he belonged, sorrow at not having contrived to over-reach him to a

greater extent. The money, however, being produced, and the sum paid, the boy demanded and received from the younger man, who carried a pack upon his shoulders, some little articles of property belonging, he said, to himself.

“The boy is now yours, my Lord,” said the Italian, looking wistfully at the closing mouth of the bag; “but surely your Lordship will give me another crown for the bargain’s sake.”

“I will tell you what I will give you,” replied Charles of Montsoreau:—“if you and your base companions do not take yourselves out of the place as fast as your legs can carry you, I will order my horsemen to flog you for a mile along the road with their stirrup leathers.”

The man put his hand, with a meaning look, to the gilded hilt of his dagger; but, in an instant, one buffet from the hand of Charles of Montsoreau replied to the mute sign, by laying him prostrate on the ground. A loud laugh echoed from the inn door at this conclusion of the scene; and starting on his feet again, the Italian and his companions hurried away as fast as possible, the elder one only pausing for a

moment, at about a hundred yards' distance, to shake his clenched fist at the young nobleman, with a meaning look.

"Come, my boy," said the Count, "come and get thee some supper. Thou shalt be better treated at least with me than with them."

The boy caught his hand, and kissed it a thousand times, and the young nobleman led him towards the house, asking him as they went, "What was it they wished you to do when I came out to stop them from maltreating you?"

"To sing and play to you, and engage all your thoughts," replied the boy, "while they stole the jewel out of your hat, and put a piece of glass in its place."

CHAP. IX.

THE sweetest of all balms to a hurt mind is the doing a good action ; and with that for his consolation, Charles of Montsoreau retired to rest, and, though he slept not well, certainly, he obtained more repose than he had expected. On the following morning, he found — that which we so often find — that things done for kindly and benevolent purposes bear with them sources of recompense to ourselves which we never calculated upon. The unfortunate boy whom he had delivered from the hands of his persecutors on the preceding day, afforded the young count a subject of interest and occupation, that withdrew his thoughts from more painful themes, and gave him a degree of relief, which, though merely temporary, was in itself a blessing.

The boy stood by his side while he took his

breakfast, and looked so full of joy, that Charles of Montsoreau could not help congratulating himself upon what he had done, though he was not sufficiently ignorant of the world to suppose that, for the sum of a hundred and fifty crowns, he had bought himself a treasure of high qualities, such as the best education can hardly bestow upon the best disposition.

He had made the boy over entirely to the care of Gondrin, and told the shrewd huntsman to watch his disposition well, and let him know all the peculiarities thereof. He was himself too much occupied with gloomy thoughts, to investigate the matter fully; and, as the boy stood by him, he confined his questions to some points of his former history, and to the various accomplishments which he possessed.

To a question as to whether he could ride, the boy only replied with a smile; and it appeared afterwards that, while with the Italians, the whole of the first part of their journey through Italy and France had been performed on horseback, till some acts of dishonesty, com-

mitted in the town of Grenoble, forced them to fly on foot with all speed, and leave their beasts behind them.

The purchase of a fresh horse for the boy, and of some suits of clothes better fitted to a nobleman's page than the gay and mountebank costume in which he had come to his new master, occupied a considerable part of the morning; and by the time Charles of Montsoreau issued forth to proceed upon his journey, the mists of the early day had cleared away; the grey veil of clouds which had obscured the sky during the preceding day had been scattered into small feathery fragments by the sun and the wind; there was a feeling of spring in the breath of the air, and a look of hope and joyfulness upon all the world around.

As the boy Ignati stood by his master's stirrup for a moment before they set out, he lifted his fine dark eyes to the countenance of the young nobleman with a look of love and gratitude that was not to be mistaken. It is true that a man may smile, and smile, and be a villain; it is true that the language of looks may often be

as false as the words of the tongue; it is true that no human mode of expression may not be poisoned by hypocrisy, and that even actions themselves are often as false as looks and words. But there are moments when the free soul bursts forth through all the bonds of habit or of cunning, and sports, if it be but for a single instant, at liberty; and in those times, though the words may still be false, or at the best regulated with deliberate skill, yet there are momentary expressions that cross the countenance — lights that beam up in the eye — smiles that flutter round the lip — which betray the secret of the heart's feelings, notwithstanding the most careful guard.

Charles of Montsoreau looked down, and laid his hand upon the boy's head.

“You know, Ignati,” he said, “that you are a freeman, and not a slave. I paid your price to the Italians to give you liberty, and not to purchase you myself; so you are free to come and to go, to stay with me, or to leave me, as you like.”

“I will go with you through the world,”

replied the boy ; and though he said no more, he said it in such a tone as to leave no doubt upon the mind of Charles of Montsoreau that he was sincere for the time at least.

The boy sprang into his saddle with alacrity and grace ; and the first horseman of the court of France could not have sat his horse with more ease and vigour. His whole demeanour seemed changed from the former day, as if slavery and the degrading trade to which he had been previously bound had bowed down his spirit, and with it his corporeal frame. There was a lightness, a joyous fire in his look, which spoke the consciousness of freedom and of dawning hopes. Before, he had been but a handsome, sullen boy ; while, now, he looked older than before, and all was quickness and activity.

The sky, we have said, was brighter, the day more cheerful, and the scenery itself gradually assuming a finer and a bolder character. Entering that hilly district which lies between Linoges and Tulle, the road was constantly ascending or descending. Wide woods and

moors, broken by rocks and streams, were seen on either side ; while now a soft green meadow covered the slope, now a rich-coloured fallow field showed traces of man's industrious hand. Here and there, too, a cottage appeared, with its little garden and orchard round about it ; here and there a forge, while the castellated houses of many of the small provincial nobility showed their glittering weathercocks above the grey woods. The aspect of the whole scene was very peaceful ; and so, indeed, that part of the country was at the time ; for no towns of sufficient consequence were near to render it, though extremely defensible, worth the while of any of the various parties which tore the state to defend it against the rest. Through these scenes the young count and his attendants rode on during the day, till they came to their gîte for the night, at the pleasant-named town of St. Germain les belles Filles.

When the young Count de Logères sat down to supper, with none but one habitual attendant near him — while the rest of his train dined at a table at the other end of the hall — his mind

drew up the short summary of what changes of feeling his heart had undergone, which we are almost always inclined to make unconsciously, when we come to the end of a day's journey.

It were vain to say that the scenes through which he had passed, or the aspect of the day, or the occupation of his thoughts by the boy that he had freed, had made his heart lighter ; but they had, perhaps, taught that heart to bear its load more firmly. He still thought of Marie de Clairvaut with the intense passion of first, true, ardent love. He felt but the more convinced, at every step he took away from her, that that love would last throughout his being. He felt that, without her, life was now a blank, void of the grand pointing interest of existence — void of all sustaining power, but a knowledge of rectitude, and a purpose of endurance. It was hard, far more hard, for a young heart like his, that had seldom, if ever, tasted sorrow before, or known affliction, to undergo at once the extinction of that brightest of life's lights, the hope of mutual affection. We value not our minor sorrows sufficiently : there are great ones

to be endured by every man on earth ; and did not the lesser ones prepare us gently for the burden, we should be crushed under the first mighty misfortune that befall us. But Charles of Montsoreau had known few, so few, that he felt, as it were, stunned and benumbed by the weight of grief that now came upon him. He had been deprived of the belief that he possessed the love of Marie de Clairvaut ; he had abandoned the hope and task of winning that love ; and, at the same time, the deep, warm confidence which he had ever till that moment possessed in his brother's strong, unalterable affection, had been swept away too. He could regard Gaspar de Montsoreau no longer as he had regarded him ; he could think of him no longer as he had thought ; he could not respect or esteem him as heretofore ; and all the fraternal love that remained in his bosom towards his brother, rendered him but the more sorrowful, that his brother was less worthy than he thought.

He was sad and gloomy then, and that sadness was seen in every look and action : he

seemed scarcely to know what were the meats placed before him, and only mechanically to taste of that which was next to him. After he had eaten as much as was necessary to satisfy mere nature, he leaned his head upon his hand, and fell into deep thought, which was only interrupted by the low sweet voice of the boy, who had come quietly up to his side, saying, "May I not sing to you, sir count? I have seen a song prove better sauce to a poor meal than a duke's kitchen could produce."

"It would not be so with me, Ignati," replied the Count. "You shall not sing to me to-night, my good boy; but go to bed, and rest your young limbs."

Though he refused him, yet the voluntary offer the boy had made came sweetly; for, on the first sweep of disappointment's heavy wing, a sort of misanthropy is cast upon us which we own not even to our own hearts. We doubt, without our will, that there is such a thing as affection, or gratitude, or kindly feeling, or generous sensibility left upon earth; and it is sweet, and happy, and consoling when any thing

happens, however light or small, to show us feelingly that our dark judgment of the world was wrong. He still refused the boy's music, however, though kindly; for he was busy with his own thoughts, and wished to pursue them undisturbed.

On the following morning he continued his journey; nor is it worth while to follow him day by day, while, taking his way by Bourges and Chalons, he approached the north-eastern frontier of France. The journey was long and tedious, but it was accomplished without any accident or interruption; and, indeed, till he approached near the frontiers of Lorraine, the traces of the war which desolated France were comparatively small. Commerce, indeed, there was little or none throughout the land; but agriculture was pursued with less difficulty; and in those districts where the strife was not actually going on, the first return of spring saw the husbandman again in the field.

The neighbourhood of Troyes and Chalons, however, began to show evident marks of the ravages of war: the fields were unculti-

vated; the towns guarded with rigorous strictness; no tall ricks of corn were seen near the farm-house; the cattle lowed not in the plains; the shepherd turned anxiously round at every sound of a horse's steps; and, in many places, the vineyards themselves showed the marks of fire, and the vines were seen cut down and piled up for fuel. Wherever the traveller stopped and inquired what was the cause of the destruction he beheld, he was told that a body of reiters had pillaged here, or a horde of Germans wasted there; and, although there were some who ventured, in the angry indignation of their heart, to curse both the house of Guise and the house of La Mark, and to express their horror of all parties alike, yet it was evident that the chivalrous spirit of the Guises, their gracious demeanour, and their heroic actions against a foreign enemy, had in general won the love of the people, so that they were greatly preferred to the Protestant princes of Sedan, who had led an army of thirty thousand strangers to the invasion of their native country.

Charles of Montsoreau learned all these tales as he passed ; and at each inn where he stopped he received some warning not to advance rashly in this direction, or in that, lest he should meet with some of the scattered bands who had turned their swords into reaping hooks in a very different sense from the pacific one, and were gathering in a harvest which they had not sown, from the fears and necessities of the country.

Thus it happened in setting out from Chalons, the good aubergiste, who had taken care to extract from the purse of the young nobleman as much as could be obtained with any appearance of honesty, counselled him strongly, instead of pursuing the high road towards Rheims, to follow the way along the river towards Mareuil, and thence across the country. " For," said he, " there is a band of at least fifty reiters have been watching the Rheims' gate for the last ten days, and have taken toll of every one that passed, be he citizen or gentleman. Your train, too, is so scanty, young sir, that one sees evidently you come from a quieter place.

Why, no one here ever thinks of riding without forty men at least; and the good Duke of Guise dare not go himself from one château to another without a hundred salads at his back."

As Charles of Montsoreau was not by any means well satisfied with the peculiar species of honesty of his host, he made no reply to his counsels, but followed his former purpose, and took the high road. Ere he had pursued it two miles, however, the merry huntsman Gondrin rode up, with the boy Ignati by his side, and some eagerness on his countenance.

"My Lord," he said, "the boy declares that he saw the gleaming of spear-heads upon the side of the hill a mile on."

"Indeed, Ignati!" said the Count — "your eyes must be sharp. Point out to me these spears; for I have seen nothing of them, though I have been watching anxiously."

"I can't show them to you now, sir," replied the boy, "for they have gone slowly behind the wood; but I saw them, believe me, and I am not mistaken."

Even while he was speaking a peasant was

seen coming along the road upon an ass which he was beating forward to as fast a pace as the brute's natural indocility would admit. The moment, however, that he saw the count's troop drawn up in the midst of the road, he suddenly paused in his course, with a look of some alarm, which did not seem at all to subside upon the young nobleman riding up to him with Gondrin and the boy, and insisting upon his stopping; for he was now endeavouring to drive his beast into one of the by-paths through the country.

He was soon re-assured, however; and no sooner did he find that the party he had met with was not calculated to be an object of terror, than he endeavoured to inspire the persons of whom it was composed with the same fears which had taken possession of himself, informing the young count that he had just himself passed the reiters, who, though they had left him the vegetables that he was carrying in his panniers to the market at Chalons, had taken from him all his poultry and eggs. He magnified their number and their ferocity very greatly; and as it was evident that they would not prove the

most agreeable of companions on the road he was about to travel, Charles of Montsoreau obtained more correct information of the peasant as to the way to Mareuil, and struck back again from the high road towards the course of the Marne.

The circuit that he had made, however, and the time that had been lost by one interruption or another, rendered it late before he reached the village of Condé, and it was dark before he approached Mareuil. The place was unfortified, and, as far as he could judge in passing through the little narrow street by which he first entered it, had an air of greater tranquillity and comfort than he had lately seen.

No house of public entertainment was apparent till he reached an open part of the street, near the centre of the little town, where a large stone building stood back from the rest, and displayed a wide front, with windows few and far between, and a single large archway for a door. Over this swung the sign of the inn, under a highly ornamented and gilded grating of iron-work; and as soon as the

feet of horses were heard in the dusty open space before the building, mine host and two of his palefreniers rushed forth to receive the new guests.

The night was clear, and the moon was up; and what between the assistance of the fair planet and the host's lantern, a very sufficient knowledge could be obtained in a moment of the persons of the strangers. That knowledge seemed in some degree to surprise and puzzle the landlord; and had Charles of Montsoreau remarked very acutely, he would have perceived that some one else had been expected in his place.

He noted not the demeanour of the landlord at all, however; but, springing from his horse, entered the archway, and passed through a door which stood ajar to the right, showing through the crevice a well lighted room within. It was one of the large open halls of an old French inn, the rafters low and black with smoke, the chimney wide and stretching out far into the room, the andirons, on which were piled up immense masses of wood, contain-

ing each more than one hundred weight of iron, and the table in the midst fit to support viands for forty or fifty people. The light which the young nobleman had seen proceeded both from the fire which was blazing and crackling cheerfully, and from two large sconces of polished brass hung in different parts of the room.

The hall possessed at the moment of the Count's entrance only one tenant, of whom he could see little more, than that he was dressed in grey of the most ordinary kind. His hat was on, and differed a good deal from the cap and feather then common at the court of France, being tall in the crown, broad in the brim, and decorated by a single cock's feather raising itself from the button on the right side. Large untanned riding-boots were drawn up above his knees, a light sword was by his side, as if he felt himself in perfect security; and he wore a falling collar of lace over his doublet, instead of the ruff, which was ordinary at that period. The buttons of the grey suit were of jet, and on the middle finger of his right hand was a large seal ring, of apparently coarse manufacture.

He was sitting at one of the farther corners of the table, with an inkhorn before him and a pen in his hand, busily writing on a sheet of coarse paper, which had been supplied to him by the host ; so that looking at him as he sat, one might very well have taken him for some public notary of a neighbouring town, in not the best practice in the world.

Such, indeed, would have been the interpretation which Charles of Montsoreau would have put upon his appearance, had it not been for the somewhat Spanish cut of his hat, and the singular fashion of his collar, which puzzled him a good deal ; for, notwithstanding the occupation of his mind with other thoughts, and the very ordinary apparel of the stranger, there was something in his form and aspect which attracted attention and excited curiosity in the young nobleman, he neither knew why nor how.

As soon as he heard a step entering the room, the stranger turned partially round and half rose from his seat ; but a momentary glance was sufficient to show him that the person who

appeared was unknown to him; and, turning towards the table again, he pursued his occupation. The young count advanced slowly to the fire, and drawing a settle near, stretched out his feet to warm himself, turning his back to the stranger so as to avoid any air of scanning his proceedings. Gondrin and the other attendants came and went, asking him questions and directions as he thus sat; and from time to time the writer turned round his head and examined their movements and appearance, but without uttering a word. The aubergiste himself at length approached the fireplace, in order, it seemed, to consult with the young gentleman regarding his supper. There was but little, he said, in the house, and at that late hour it was impossible to procure much more. However, he would do his best, he added, and assured his new guest of at least giving him good wine.

Charles of Montsoreau informed him that he was easily satisfied, and doubted not that every thing would be good and abundant. But somewhat to his surprise—for such things were not at all customary in that day—the aubergiste pro-

ceeded to demand whether he would not prefer having a chamber apart to sup in, rather than take his meal in the common hall. He was in the act of replying in the negative, when the voice of the stranger who was writing at the table made itself heard for the first time, exclaiming, in an authoritative tone, "Pierre Jean."

The innkeeper instantly flew to his side, and the other addressed him in a low tone, to which the innkeeper replied almost in a whisper.

"As you will, Maître Henri, as you will," said the landlord in conclusion. "But I think it very strange they have not come."

The other merely nodded his head in reply, and then folding up the paper he had written, he put it in his pocket, and approached the fire with an air of being quite at home. He was a man of about six or seven and thirty years of age, and, as he now stood before Charles of Montsoreau at his full height, appeared to the eyes of the young nobleman one of the most powerful men he had ever beheld. His chest was at once broad and deep, his limbs mus-

cular and long, the head small, the flanks thin, and the foot and hand well formed. Every indication was there of great strength and great activity, and the countenance also harmonised perfectly well with the figure, the broad high forehead giving that air of a powerful and active mind which we are all, whether physiognomists or not, inclined by nature to see in the expanse which covers and seems to represent the great instrument of the human intellect. He wore the mustachio somewhat long, and the beard pointed, but small. The eyes were large and fine, the eyebrows strongly marked, the nose was beautifully formed, displaying the wide expansive nostril, generally reckoned a sign of generous feelings; and though there was a cut upon his brow scarcely healed, and a deep scar in his cheek of a more remote date, yet they did not at all detract from the handsomeness of the countenance, which, notwithstanding the plainness of his dress and appearance, was peculiarly striking and attractive.

“This is a cold night, young gentleman,” he said, as he approached the fire, “and you ride

out somewhat late for a traveller in these parts of the world."

"Oh, I fear not the cold," replied Charles of Montsoreau; "and though I certainly prefer not the night to travel in, yet, when I must betake myself to it, I do so without much discomfort or hesitation."

"Ay; but there are other things sweep over this country besides the wind," said the stranger, "things more cutting and more sharp, I can assure you."

"Oh, against those I go pretty well prepared also," replied Charles of Montsoreau; "every French gentleman is a soldier, you know; and we are not unwilling or unable to make use of our arms when it may be needful."

"You have served, I suppose," said the stranger, perhaps at Coutras, with the Duke of Joyeuse, or with Harry of Navarre and his Huguenots."

Charles of Montsoreau looked up with a smile. "If we begin talking of where we served, and on what causes, good sir," he said, "we shall have our worthy host, Pierre Jean, requiring us

to give up our swords into his safe keeping till we set out again, as indeed he is bound by law to do."

"Oh, no fear, no fear," replied the stranger, laughing. "We shall not quarrel and cut each other's throats, depend upon it. You are here, a young lord, with, it seems to me, a dozen or two of attendants, and I am alone, a poor Escribano, by name Maître Henri, as you just heard."

"And yet," replied Charles of Montsoreau, "the poor Escribano, I should judge, had seen some service in his day, and that not very many years ago either."

"Oh, you judge from that cut upon my forehead. That is but the scratch of a cat."

"Well, then," answered Charles, "if you will tell me sincerely whether that cat's claw was a reiter's estramaçon, or the spear of a De la Mark, I will tell you whether I drew my sword at Coutras, and on what part."

The stranger gazed at him for several moments, with an inquiring and yet half laughing glance.

“You are as keen,” he said at length, “as a Gascon; perhaps, for aught I know, as ambitious as a Guise, as hardy and obstinate as a La Mark, and as politic and secret as a Brisson. The last, at least, I am sure of; and I can tell you, my good youth, if I judge right, we are not likely to part so soon as we both expected when you entered this room.”

“Perhaps not, Maître Henri,” replied Charles of Montsoreau; “for, if I judge rightly, and you are, as you say, alone, I am not likely to leave you till I see you safe on the other side of Rheims. There lie a strong body of reiters on the Chalons road; and there is one man in France for whom I have much love and respect, but who is somewhat too famous for exposing himself unnecessarily. I have but few men with me; but, well led, and with a great purpose, those few may do much.”

The expression which the stranger’s countenance assumed, as he listened to this speech, was strange and mingled. There was a smile came upon it, as if half amused, half touched; and yet there was a degree of doubt hung wa-

vering upon his brow, while he first scrutinised the countenance of his companion closely, and then, casting down his eyes, fell into a deep fit of thought. After a short pause, however, he replied, — “You fought at Coutras, sir, neither for Henry of Navarre nor Anne of Joyeuse, that is clear. Am I not right?”

“Quite, Maître Henri,” replied the young count, with an air of indifference and a smile; “I fought neither for the heretics, because, Heaven be praised, I am a good Catholic, nor for the minions, because the hero of Jarnac and Montcouthour has passed away into a lover of pet puppies and a pedant in cosmetics.”

A sarcastic smile curled the lip of his companion while he spoke. “Two good, wise, and sufficient reasons,” he said, “such as a notary may approve of. But tell me, young gentleman, have we ever met before?”

“Never,” answered Charles of Montsoreau, “unless we met before we were born. But, however, Maître Henri, to put an end to all doubts, that I see are in your mind, my name

is Charles of Montsoreau, Count of Logères, whom you may have heard of, perhaps, though he has yet to make a name in history, and hopes to do so with his sword."

The stranger instantly extended his hand to him, exclaiming, "Indeed, young friend, indeed! How came you here? What brought you to this part of the world?"

"I came for two purposes," replied Charles of Montsoreau. "In the first place, it is long since I have seen Logères; my tenantry need my presence; and it is time that I should take the management of those estates out of the hands of underlings, and defend, protect, and direct them myself."

While he spoke, several of his attendants returned to the room, accompanied by the host, to make preparation for the visiter's supper, and the stranger instantly resumed the position he had at first been standing in, after he approached the fire, while Charles of Montsoreau went on, taking a hint to be cautious from his companion's eyes. "In the next place," he continued, "my second purpose was to visit the

good Duke of Guise, who, I understand, is at Soissons, or in that neighbourhood."

"He was at Nancy but a week or two ago," replied the other; "but, after all, you may very likely find him at Soissons, for he is continually moving about the country; and there was a report not long ago, that he was to hold a private conference one of these days with Monsieur de Bellievre, sent on the part of the king. But there is little trust in this Henry, and Heaven knows whether he will send or not. — Shall we sup together, sir?"

"With all my heart," replied the young count, not a little to the surprise of some of his attendants who were in the room, and who did not at all comprehend how their lord, whom they were themselves accustomed to treat with much reverence and respect, came to sit down with a person of such plain apparel.

Their astonishment was not less when they beheld the young nobleman, after supper had been placed upon the table, wait till the other was seated, before he took his own place. The only one who seemed to understand the whole was the

boy Ignati, who said, in an under voice, to Gondrin, “He has forgotten himself, master huntsman! Or is Maître Henri gone for to-night?”

“And who is Maître Henri?” demanded Gondrin, in the same tone.

“I could tell, if I would,” answered the boy, “but our lord knows him, if you do not.”

Before he had well ended, a servant, dressed like his master, in grey, entered the room in haste, and placed a written paper in the hands of Maître Henri, who read it with attention, and then bending over the table towards Charles of Montsoreau, demanded, in a low tone, “How many men have you with you, my young friend?”

“Only seven,” replied Charles of Montsoreau, “besides myself and the page. But they are all well-armed, resolute, and determined, and I, the eighth, trust not to be behind any of them.”

“Eleven!” said his companion, musing. “We should but muster eleven if we were to set off this moment; for though we counted six amongst us when I arrived, I have sent off

three to a distance, and they cannot be back ere the morning. No, we had better wait till daylight. I must give them till twelve o'clock, too, to see if they will keep their word with me : though, by these tidings, it seems to be broken already.—Hark ye,” he continued, speaking to the servant who had brought him the paper, and who still stood beside his chair—“hark ye ; bend down your ear.”

The man did as he was bidden ; and, after whispering to him for several minutes, the stranger added, in a louder tone, “If you go by Les petites Loges, you will pass them. Tell him that fifty will do. I want no more, and we must not leave any point weak.”

After he had thus spoken, he tore off a bit of the paper he had received, wrote a few words down upon it in a careless way, and tossed it over to Charles of Montsoreau. Those words were, “Schelandre, who you know is as brave as a lion and as cunning as a fox, is looking out for me, with two squadrons, on the road by Hautvilliers. He has got news of my coming

by some means—very likely from Henry himself.”

Charles turned an inquiring look upon his companion's face, as if to ask, what is to be done? But the other glanced his eye over his shoulder towards the attendants, and proceeded with his supper, commenting upon the landlord's good cheer, praising his wine, and laughing and talking gaily, as if there were no such thing as peril upon the earth.

CHAP. X.

It was in the grey of the morning on the following day that a party of horsemen, now amounting in all to the number of fifteen or sixteen, was seen winding through the little wood, which at that time occupied the ground in the neighbourhood of Chaumizy, a spot which in the present day sends forth many an excellent bottle of sparkling wine, to warm the hearts of many a distant potator.

To any eye which watched the progress of that party from a height — and there was an eye which did so — the movements of the band might seem complicated and curious, — now turning to the east, now winding to the west — now marching on straight forward to the north. One thing, however, was evident, that those horsemen affected by-paths and shady roads, never crossing a hill where they could

take their way through the valley, never choosing the open ground where they could go through the wood. Sometimes the eye which, as we have said, watched them from the most elevated ground in the neighbourhood, lost them for several minutes amongst the trees and vineyards, sometimes saw them emerge when it least expected them, sometimes was baffled altogether in regard to a conception of their onward course, by the strange turns and windings which they took.

Nevertheless the band still continued to advance in its own way, winding amidst the brown leafless woods, with Charles of Montsoreau completely armed at its head; Gondrin, little less formidably equipped by his side on the right hand, and the boy Ignati, now dressed completely as a page, with pistols at his saddlebow, and a strong dagger on his thigh, upon the left hand of the young nobleman. Then came, mixed together, the attendants of the Count — all as we have described them before, strongly armed; — two or three strangers of military appearance, clothed in general in grey

suits with a double black cross observable on some parts of their garments; and two or three hardy spirits from the little village of Mareuil, who had been hired to swell the numbers of the Count's train, as they passed across the dangerous part of the country between Chalons and Rheims.

Amongst the rest of the persons thus mixed together, might be observed Maître Henri, dressed precisely as he had been the night before, though most of the other personages in grey had contrived to purchase in the village of Mareuil several pieces of defensive and offensive armour, such as steel caps, called salads, breast plates, and the large heavy swords then in use against cavalry, which, like the attendants of Charles of Montsoreau, they bore naked in their hands.

Very few words were uttered as the band rode along: sometimes an order was given in a low voice by the young count, sometimes, while the rest continued to advance, he rode back, to speak to some one in the rear, sometimes he addressed a few words to Gondrin

or the page ; but in general all passed in silence.

“ Are you sure you know your way ? ” he demanded at length of the boy Ignati, on their suddenly taking a path which appeared more than usually out of the direct course.

“ As well as I know the lines on my own hand, sir,” replied the boy in the Italian language, which he had discovered that his master understood. “ I would rather lose my eyes than lead you or him a step wrong.”

“ Who do you mean by him ? ” demanded Charles of Montsoreau, in the same tongue.

“ I mean him with the scar,” replied the boy.

“ Why, what is he to thee ? ” asked his master.

“ Why, he is the only one in all the land,” replied the boy, “ that ever was kind to me before yourself ; and I remember seven months ago, when they made me dance and sing at a great banquet in the town of Nancy, he patted my head, and called me a good youth, and while all the rest showered money into the box my

master carried round, he gave me a broad piece, and told me it was for myself. They took it from me afterwards: but he did not know that."

"Then recollect him, and you know him?" demanded his master.

"Grey cloth and brown baize will not hide him from me," replied the boy, with an intelligent smile, "though when I saw him, it was crimson velvet and gold. The heart has its eyes, dear lord, as well as the head, and the heart's eyes never forget."

"Well then, Ignati," replied the Count, "in case of any attack — which we cannot be sure will not take place — you attach yourself to his side, quit him not for a moment, serve him in every thing; but in the very first place guide him on towards Rheims, by the safest paths that you know."

"But must I leave you?" demanded the boy — "must I leave you in the hands of the enemy?"

"Never mind me," replied his master — "I will defend myself, good Ignati. Besides, they

can scarcely be called my enemies, as I have taken no service against them."

Just as he spoke, the band issued forth from the little by-path which they had been pursuing, into one of the main roads through the wood, and saw before them, at the distance of about a hundred yards, an old grey stone cross, raised upon several steps, in the very centre of the road, marking the spot where two ways crossed. When first they came within sight of that memento of past years, the ground around it was completely solitary: but before they reached it, five or six heavy armed horsemen came at a quick pace up the road leading to the left, and planted themselves round the cross. The moment they reached it, one of their party took off his steel cap, and waved it in the air, looking at the same time down the road by which he had come, as if giving a signal to some persons who followed him.

To the eyes of Charles of Montsoreau and his companions these indications wanted no explanation, nor was any consultation necessary; for it was evident that there was but one thing

to be done, namely, to endeavour to force a passage through this little advanced party of the reiters before the main body could come up.

“Quick to the side of Maître Henri,” exclaimed Charles of Montsoreau, speaking to the page. “You, Gondrin, too, attach yourself to him. Leave nothing undone to secure his escape; and now forward, my men! Upon them!”

He turned one anxious glance round in the direction of his newly acquired companion; but saw — with some surprise, perhaps — nothing but a calm, unperturbed smile on his countenance. Maître Henri was quietly drawing his sword from its sheath, and in answer to the anxious look of Charles of Montsoreau, only gave a familiar nod, saying, “Go on!”

The young count’s orders had been already given, and his horse was instantly put into the gallop. The reiters on their part seemed to require neither parley nor explanation any more than the young count; and instantly separating into two parties, they occupied the

road on either side of the cross : he, who was evidently the commander, again waving his steel cap in the same direction as before.

Charles of Montsoreau saw that all depended upon speed, and the prompt execution of his commands ; and, turning to the man who followed immediately behind him, he exclaimed, without at all checking his pace as he did so, “ Pass round to the right of the cross with two others ; but where the passage is forced, attach yourself to drive back the men on the left of the cross, up the road to the left ; while I with the rest bar that road against those that are coming up.”

The man seemed to understand at a word ; and in a moment more they were at the spot where the two roads crossed. As he came up, Charles of Montsoreau turned his head for an instant, and, to his great satisfaction, saw that a large body of horse, which was coming down at full speed, was still at a considerable distance.

That turning of his head, however, had nearly cost him his life ; for the three men im-

mediately behind him, having been detached to the other side, one of the reiters, emboldened by this circumstance, spurred suddenly forward, and aimed a long heavy stroke at the head of the young nobleman, which struck him upon the neck, and had it not been for the goodness of his arms, must inevitably have killed him on the spot. As it was, the blow made the count bend almost to his saddle-bow : but it was only to raise himself again immediately, and to return the blow with a force and vigour which cast the reiter headlong from his horse.

At the same time the three men whom he had detached, passed round to the right of the cross. The reiters, who were opposed to them on that side, prepared to stop their progress ; but as they were about to do so, they perceived Gondrin, the page, and Maître Henri, with one of his attendants, advancing at full speed a little further to the right. This was enough to make them desist their opposition to the others, and turn to close the path on that side, while the three followers of Charles of Montsoreau, taking advantage of the space thus left, wheeled

upon the men on the left side of the cross, and drove them back, trampling upon their fallen companion.

The young nobleman, as soon as he saw the success of this manœuvre, drew in his rein for a moment, in order to suffer it to be fully executed, and the reiters to be driven back into the road up which they had come. On the other hand, they, finding themselves decidedly overmatched, suffered this to be accomplished with ease, and made the best of their way back towards the larger body of their comrades, who were now coming down at full speed to their support.

The moment that Charles of Montsoreau saw this accomplished, he turned his head once more to Maître Henri, exclaiming, "On, on, with all speed ! I will insure you at least ten minutes : " and then, without waiting for any answer, he brought the greater part of his men into the road down which the chief body of the reiters was advancing, and prepared, as best he might, to stand the coming shock, which was certain to be tremendous.

In the mean while, Maître Henri, with Gondrin on one side, and the boy on the other, had advanced at full speed towards the three reiters on the right of the cross. One of the stranger's own attendants followed only a step behind; but as they came up, a fierce-looking, powerful man, from amongst their opponents, aimed his petronel right at the head of Maître Henri, exclaiming, "I know thee! I know thee!" and was in the very act of firing, when the page, making his horse spring forward, endeavoured to grasp the muzzle of the piece.

He did not succeed entirely, but was enabled to turn the weapon in some degree, so that the ball passed through the tall Spanish hat of Maître Henri; and being fired from the higher ground on which the cross stood, entered the head of the attendant who was coming up behind, and killed him on the spot. The contest at that point was thus rendered a very unequal one, there being but two men, and one of those nearly unarmed, with a boy of fourteen or fifteen, opposed to three strong and well-armed men.

As all knew, however, that the party headed

by Charles of Montsoreau could maintain the road but a very short time against the force coming down upon him, the gain or loss of a minute was every thing to those who were struggling on the right of the cross. The long heavy sword usually borne by the reiter was but feebly opposed by the light weapon of Maître Henri; but that light weapon was used with a degree of skill, coolness, and presence of mind which made up for the disparity; and, with the page still close to his side, he was driving back his immediate opponent, warding off every sweep of his heavy blade, pressing him so hard whenever he paused for a moment, as to prevent him from snatching one of the pistols from his saddle-bow, and gradually urging his own charger onward, till he had very nearly cleared the road before him, when one of the other two reiters—who had hitherto attached themselves to Gondrin, as the only completely equipped man-at-arms of the opposite party—turned suddenly upon Maître Henri, and assailed him on the right, while the other rapidly recovered his ground upon the left.

Never, however, did skill, strength, and presence of mind, do so much for one individual as they did for the man in grey. For a moment or two he applied himself solely to the defensive, wheeling his horse from the one to the other, as they attacked him with the most extraordinary rapidity and skill,—now parrying one blow, now parrying another, and still watching for an opportunity of resuming the offensive. At length the reiter who was assailing him on his right hand, seeing that their other companion had by this time been well nigh mastered by Gondrin, determined to end all by killing the horse of the man opposed to him, and with the bridle in his teeth, and his sword in both hands, aimed a tremendous blow at the poor animal's head: but Maître Henri instantly divining his intention, turned the spur sharply into the horse's side, and reined him to the left at the same time.

The noble animal, practised for years to comprehend the slightest indication of its rider's will, instantly took a demivolte, as it was called, to the left with a sharp spring. The

reiter's sword descended with tremendous force ; but the object at which he had aimed was just beyond his reach, and the weight of the sword, with the impetus he had given the blow, nearly threw him from the saddle, making him bend down to his saddle-bow. The opportunity was all that his opponent desired ; his horse was turned like lightning, and before the man could raise himself, he received a severe wound in the back of the neck, which made heaven and earth, and the whole scene around, swim dizzily before his eyes.

The other reiter on the left, however, was upon the successful swordsman in a moment. By this time his pistol was in his hand, and a very slight movement brought the muzzle within a foot of Maître Henri's bosom.

That advantage retained for one single second more might have changed the destiny of many thousands of human beings ; but at the very moment that he was sure of his aim, and about to draw the trigger, a strong, well-aimed, unhesitating blow from the hand of the page, drove the dagger, with which he was armed,

under the very arm which held the pistol, between it and his corselet. So strong, so determined was that blow, that the weapon entered to the very haft, and there remained, fixed between the corselet and the brassard, so that the boy could not withdraw it.

But that mattered not, the weapon had cut through many a vital part in its passage; the sick faintness of death came upon the man's heart and brain; the pistol and the reins dropped from his hands; and, after a reeling attempt to keep the saddle, he fell headlong to the ground.

One glance of the eye had shown Maître Henri all that took place; and without uttering a word, he continued the fight with his other antagonist, taking advantage of the wound he had given him, and pressing him so hard, that at length the horse, reined back upon the slippery ground of the forest road, reared, and fell over with his rider, crushing him under its weight.

By this time, though the space that had elapsed was very short, Gondrin had so far

got the better of his antagonist, that the man's steel cap had fallen off under the repeated blows of the huntsman, and a deep bleeding wound in the forehead showed that the protection of the casque was not a little wanting. The sight of one of his companions dead upon the ground, and of the horse falling over with the other, did not give him any very great encouragement to pursue the strife; and he was making the best of his way, closely pursued by Gondrin, towards the branch of the road which led up to the right, when the voice of Maître Henri attracted the huntsman's ear, exclaiming, "Leave him, leave him! Let us make our way onward, with all speed, now that the road is clear."

Gondrin certainly asked himself, "Is it fair and right to leave my noble master thus?" But the orders of that master had been distinct, and he obeyed at all risks, following Maître Henri, who galloped on with a degree of speed which, to the eyes of the huntsman, seemed somewhat unseemly. At the distance of about a mile and a half, however, the road

took a turn to the left; and, in a moment, a large body of horse was before the eyes of the fugitives, advancing at a somewhat quick pace towards the scene where the late contest had taken place. On the left breast of each corselet appeared a double cross; and, without drawing his rein for a moment, Maître Henri galloped up towards them, while a loud shout of "The Duke! the Duke!" burst from the ranks of the soldiery.

Few, however, were the words which the man in grey spoke. He wheeled his horse at their head, bade Gondrin and the page get into the rear; adding, "You have had fighting enough for to-day, my friends," — and in a moment the whole body was put to full speed, and advancing towards the cross, in the heart of the wood.

They came but up in time, however; for Charles of Montsoreau, though contending pertinaciously for every inch of ground, from a knowledge of how needful was each moment to his companion, had been driven back by superior numbers into the other road, and,

though still keeping his face to the enemy, and closing the path against them, was losing ground rapidly.

In the first shock with the reiters, he had turned his head to ascertain that there was no space left for the passage of the enemy, and had beheld, to his surprise, that two or three of Maître Henri's servants had remained with him, instead of following their master. In answer to an exclamation expressive of his surprise, however, one of the men merely replied, "It was his order;" and the fierceness of the struggle that ensued left no room for farther inquiry.

The number of reiters amounted to at least fifty men; and had the space been open, the young cavalier must have been overpowered in a moment. But the arrival, nay, the very sight, of the strong body that now came down to his assistance, changed in a moment the aspect of the whole scene.

At a single word from the lips of Maître Henri, the lances of the three first lines of his horsemen were levelled in an instant; the

reiters halted in mid-career; and Charles of Montsoreau, at once comprehending what had occurred, opened the way, as far as possible, by drawing his wounded and weary followers out of the road, and plunging their horses, where they could, in amongst the trees. The reiters wavered for a moment, as if hesitating whether to retreat at once, or endeavour to make a stand; but so sudden and unexpected was the appearance of the adverse horse, that nothing had been prepared for retreat; and the commander found himself forced to maintain his ground for a time, till the ranks that followed could be wheeled and withdrawn.

In the mean time, with loud cries of "Lorraine! Lorraine*! A Guise! a Guise!" the adverse cavalry came down; but the German horse could not stand for a moment before the long lances of the men-at-arms, and in a few minutes all was confusion, flight, and pursuit.

As soon as the cavalry of Lorraine had

* The Duke of Guise was at this time employing several bodies of troops levied in Lorraine, against the Princes of Sedan.

passed by, Charles of Montsoreau drew his men out again from the wood, and, perfectly secure from any further annoyance, began to count his loss, and to examine into the state of the wounded men who had continued to fight on by his side. He himself was bleeding from a sharp wound in the head, received from so strong a blow of one of the reiter's heavy swords, that not even his steel cap had been able to protect him. He had another wound, also, from a pistol ball in the left arm; but it was very slight, and had not prevented him from managing his horse with ease. Almost every man about him was more or less wounded, and some severely, but only two had been left on the ground from which he had been driven; and he hastened on after the two parties still engaged in conflict, to see for those who were thus missing.

Luckily, the reiters, in their retreat, had followed the straight road behind them, instead of taking that by which they came; otherwise the whole force of charging cavalry must have passed over the young count's two followers.

One of them was still living, and afterwards recovered, though he was at the time so severely wounded in the leg that he could not move from the spot where he lay. The other was quite dead, a pistol ball having passed through his head.

The road through the wood was now, for a minute or two, turned into an hospital; and all that was possible was done to stanch the bleeding of the wounds which had been received, and to put the men in a state to pursue their onward journey towards Rheims. Nor were the wounded reiters themselves neglected; for Charles of Montsoreau was not one to forget, as soon as the eagerness of the actual strife was over, that his adversaries were his fellow-men.

This had been scarcely completed, and the young count once more on horseback again, when the sound of distant trumpets ringing merrily through the wood gave notice that the horsemen of Lorraine were on their return; and in a few minutes after a group of some six or seven cavaliers, with Maître Henri at their head, appeared coming up the road, fol-

lowed at the distance of a couple of hundred yards by the body of cavalry he had met with so opportunely. All was laughter and merriment amongst the little group of officers; and, though Maître Henri himself was not loud in his mirth, he came on smiling at the jests and gibes of the others, and sometimes answering them in the same strain, though with a manner somewhat chastened and stately.

At the distance of about twenty or five and twenty yards from the young count, he held up his hand to the troops that followed, pronouncing the word "Halt!" Then riding up with his group of officers, he grasped Charles of Montsoreau warmly by the hand; and, turning to those who followed, said, "Noble lords, to this gallant gentleman, to his courage, skill, determination, and good faith, I owe life or liberty. You are witnesses that, in the fullest manner, I acknowledge the debt, and that in no manner will I fail to pay it, when he chooses to call upon me."

"Your highness is too generous in your consideration of the service," replied Charles of

Montsoreau. "I came from a distant part of France to seek you, in order to offer you my poor services — perhaps somewhat tardily — in your efforts to chase from the soil of our native country bands of foreign adventurers who have no business to meddle with our intestine quarrels. I found you likely to be surprised by accident by one of those bands; and what could I do less than assist you to the utmost of my power?"

"Our views of the extent of the service," replied the Duke of Guise, with the bright smile of his house playing on his lip, "must be somewhat different, I fear, my young friend. But now we have met, we will not part speedily. You must be my guest, and go on with me, first to Rheims, and then to Soissons, with all speed. There we will talk of our future alliance; for the Count de Logères and the Duke of Guise shall treat together as crown to crown, and nobody call it treason. I have," he continued in a lower voice, but with a marked and meaning smile — "I have to ask you many questions in regard to a fair child of our house, who has,

according to her letters and to yours, received the same protection and defence at your hands which you have this day afforded her uncle. Perhaps it may be on her account that you come to seek me. Is it so, good friend?"

The words of the Duke — those words which, under other circumstances, might have been the brightest and the dearest to the heart of Charles of Montsoreau — now entered into his spirit like a sword. The beaming smile of his race upon the lip of the princely Guise called up before the eye of fancy in a moment the form of the beautiful and beloved being on whose countenance he had first seen it. All his tenderness — all his affection for her — all the deep, unchangeable attachment of his heart — were felt at that moment more deeply, more powerfully, than ever; but, at the same time, strong upon his mind, came the bitter resolution he had taken to yield his hopes of happiness, to cast away his chance, his most probable chance, of the brightest joy that fancy could dream of, and to yield to the brother who had ill-treated

him all those advantages which he himself of right possessed.

The blood fled from his cheek to his heart, as if to strengthen it against the pains and against the temptations of that moment; and the Duke of Guise, seeing him turn very pale, judged, perhaps, wrongly of his feelings, and again grasped him by the hand, saying, "Fear not, fear not, good friend. Come, let us on upon our way. I may meet with tidings at Rheims to hasten my progress onwards."

CHAP. XI.

DURING the two days that followed the events recorded in the last few pages, Charles of Montsoreau had scarcely any opportunity of speaking with the Duke of Guise, without that multitude of listeners around, which renders all conversation general and frequently insignificant. It is true he dwelt in the same splendid hotel which served the Duke for his residence in the city of Rheims; that he dined with him at the same table; that he was present on every occasion when he received the nobles who flocked around him. But the continual press of business of various kinds, the constant coming and going of couriers from and to Paris and Nancy; the writing of letters that seemed innumerable, and the almost hourly consultations with different members of the clergy and officers of the army, seemed to occupy the whole private time of the

Duke of Guise, and to leave him no space for either thought or repose.

At length on the third morning, when the young nobleman had breakfasted with the Duke in company with the Duke of Nemours, the Baron d'Aussonville, the bailiff of St. Michael, and a number of other gentlemen, with two or three ladies of the good town of Rheims—who seemed not a little anxious to attract the attention of the Duke—Guise, on rising to proceed to other business, drew his young friend aside for a moment, and asked him some questions concerning the wounded men. The Count replied that they all bade fair to recover; and after a few words more, spoken in the same tone, and evidently intended for the ears of those around, though apparently addressed to him in private, the Duke dropped his voice nearly to a whisper, saying, “I have much to talk with you about. Sup with me alone to-night at nine o'clock, when I trust we shall have time to make all our arrangements.”

Charles of Montsoreau did not miss the hour; but descending from the apartments which had

been assigned to him, and which were immediately over those of the Duke, he proceeded to the hall where he had usually found him, but in which he now met with no one but a solitary lute-player, a great favourite with the Duke of Guise. The musician was now seated with his instrument in his hand, with one of his feet raised upon the huge andirons of the fireplace, and his hands employed in striking from time to time a few low and listless sounds from the instrument that lay upon his knee. The man had thus been apparently left solitary for some time; for no sooner did Charles of Montsoreau appear, than, seizing him by one of the buttons of his doublet, he began to tell him a long story, of not the most interesting kind, from which the young count would willingly have delivered himself.

Perhaps the greatest art of human benevolence that can be conceived, is that of listening with a tolerable appearance of satisfaction to a tiresome tale; and Charles of Montsoreau, whose heart was really kind and gentle, and who had not yet learned in the great wise school of the

world the lesson of treading upon the feelings of others, did his best to seem interested, till one of the Duke's servants entered the room, and, after a glance around, retired without any further announcement. A moment or two after, while the young nobleman was still in the sort of durance in which the lute-player held him, the servant again made his appearance, and, walking straight up to him, informed him that the Duke wished to speak with him in his cabinet.

"Show me the way," said the young nobleman, detaching his button from the grasp of the musician — "show me the way, and I will come directly."

"Oh, I will go with you, and show you the way," exclaimed the lute-player: "I've no idea of staying here all by myself, as melancholy as a rat in a rat-trap."

"His Highness particularly said," observed the servant in a dry tone, "that he wished to converse with Monsieur de Logères alone."

The lute-player looked confounded and mortified; but Charles of Montsoreau, not a little

pleased to be rid of his company, followed the attendant, and in a few moments was ushered into the Duke's cabinet. It was a small but somewhat lengthened octangular room, lined throughout with dark black oak, carved in the most exquisite manner. From the centre of the ceiling hung a silver chain, bearing a large lamp of the same material, with eight burners. At the further end of the room was the fireplace, and in the midst a small table with two covers and a number of dishes and cups of silver, some plain, some jewelled at the rim.

The Duke himself was standing at the farther side with his back to the fire, reading a letter by the light of a small lamp which shed its rays over his shoulder; and certainly as he stood there, now dressed in the magnificent costume of those days, partially reclining against the projecting chimney, with the letter raised in his hand, the light of the lamp streaming over his shoulder, but catching brightly upon his cheek and lip, and on the rich brown beard and mustachio, with the deep carved oak behind him, and a certain sort of gloomy splendour round

that part of the room, there probably never was any thing so graceful, so princely, so dignified, as his whole appearance.

He folded up the letter as soon as Charles of Montsoreau's step sounded in the cabinet, and banishing a slight frown which had been upon his brow while reading, he advanced to the table with a smile saying, "Our viands are getting cold, Monsieur le Comte."

"I went into the usual hall," replied the young nobleman, "not knowing where to find your Highness, and fearful of intruding upon you."

"I should have told you, I should have told you, dear friend," replied the Duke: "when I wish to have an hour in private for conversation with any of my most confidential friends, I sup in my own cabinet, which is the only place to which my worthy countrymen and acquaintances will grant the right of sanctuary. — Now Martinez," he continued, speaking to the servant, "uncover the dishes, put us down some good wine, bring me in a *naquet* to hold our dirty platters, and then leave us."

The attendant did as he was commanded, removed the tops of the dishes, put several bottles of wine down by the side of the Duke, and after bringing in a sort of buffet on a small scale, somewhat like what we now call a dumb waiter, but which was then called by the name of *naquet*, (though that word was only properly applied to the marker of a tennis-court), he retired, shutting the door closely behind him.

“This is an hour of relief,” said the Duke, as soon as the man was gone; “for our business to-night, dear count, must of course be light and easy to us both—light to you, because you have nothing to do but to express your wishes and desires to Henry of Guise, and light to me, as nothing can be more joyful to my heart than to show my gratitude for the services that you have rendered me, and to express, in every manner in my power, my esteem and regard for yourself, and my admiration for your conduct.” *

* Those who may be inclined to suppose such language inconsistent with the character of the proud, ambitious politician, which Guise is often represented to have been, need but

“Oh, my Lord,” replied Charles of Montso-reau, “I thought you had forgotten by this time to use such high-flown expressions towards me.”

“Call them not high-flown, good friend,” replied the Duke: “persons situated as I am, dealing with and often obliged of sheer necessity to excite the worst passions of our fellow-creatures, meet so rarely with frank, disinterested service, that when it comes upon us in the sudden way that yours has come upon me, without claim, without expectation, without any previous notice, it strikes us as something both wonderful and beautiful; and we admire, as we would the visit of an angel, that which gives us a view of a fairer state of being than the one with which our daily thoughts are familiar. Besides, if I must own the truth, too, there was something in the frankness—some of my adulators would call it the bluntness—with which you dealt with me in the little inn at Mareuil, evidently knowing

read any of his letters to Bassonpierre, or any other of his personal friends, to see with what openhearted affection he dealt with them.

me all the time, but still treating me as the comrade of an inn dining-room, which, as you may suppose, struck me not a little. But a truce to all fine speeches: let us begin our supper; and after doing justice to what Maître Lanecque has set before us, we will discuss the matter further at our ease."

Although the cookery of that day, as exemplified in a small but refined supper of the Duke of Guise, might well astonish, both from its materials and its combinations, any of the culinary artists of the present day, both the Duke and his young friend found it excellent, and every thing was praised as it deserved. The wine also was of the finest kind that could be procured, and the Duke was liberal of it; but Charles of Montsoreau was not one to be tempted by any vintage to drink more than was beneficial to him either corporeally or mentally; and though the Duke of Guise drank more than himself, he pressed not the ruby juice of the grape upon his young friend after he once saw that it might become disagreeable to him.

Towards Charles of Montsoreau, indeed, he

had none of those designs which lead wily politicians sometimes to press the wine-cup upon a tyro. He might, it is true, be somewhat surprised at the easy and courtly grace with which a young nobleman, educated almost entirely in the provinces, met and mingled with the highest and most stately in the land; and he might, consequently, be a little inclined to see him off his guard; but when he found that he was not disposed to take any more, he abstained from asking him, and pursued the subject of their former discourse, interrupted by various little remarks upon things of an ordinary character, touching them, however, with grace and ease, which raised them all, and made them harmonise with graver discourse.

“Now, Monsieur de Logères,” he said, as soon as he had passed to his young friend the dish at his end of the table with which they commenced the meal, “tell me clearly and exactly what were your motives and your views in coming hither from so far to seek me; for it would seem that you have been acting entirely independently of your brother. Speak to me,

my good friend, without reserve of any kind, as to a brother—as to a father, if you will—for I am old enough surely, both in years and experience, to claim that title, though indeed it is not I who have given you life, but you to whom I owe it.”

“ It is scarcely either needful or possible, my Lord,” replied the young count, “ for me to tell your Highness more than I have already told. In the first place, I came to see my lands of Logères, which, as you well know, lie not above forty or fifty miles from this spot—a long day’s journey. I have only seen them once since the death of my father. I have withdrawn but a small part of the revenues from the improvement of the territory, and the encouragement of the peasantry ; and it is time that I should now see what is the state of the whole. At the same time, I thought and believed that I had remained somewhat too long a spectator of the contentions which distract my native land. Now, my Lord Duke, I had to choose between three personages, the great leaders of the present day — Henry of Navarre, Henry of France, and Henry

Duke of Guise. The first seemed to me out of the question, though a gallant and a noble prince; for, waging war as he does, for the advancement of heresy, it was not for me to draw my sword in such a cause. Between the other two there could surely be no question; for though I may not think your Highness always right in every thing that you have done, yet as a gallant and a knightly leader, as one whom a brave and true-hearted man may follow, there is none whom I know that I could choose against yourself from one end of Europe to the other. In attaching myself to you, too, I trust and am sure that I do not ill serve my king; and, to say but the truth, I would far rather serve his Majesty under another, than come within the reach of his perfumes and cosmetics."

The Duke of Guise smiled, and leaning his arm upon the table, gazed down for a moment or two in a meditative mood, not a little struck and surprised at the calm and reasoning, but bold and straight-forward frankness with which his young companion spoke. Perhaps, too, he traced back into the past the various motives

and views with which the different distinguished men, who appeared as followers of the three leaders mentioned, had chosen their party, and he might find none amongst them all who were actuated by such feelings as the young man before him. He was silent for several moments then; and the first thing that roused him was the young count adding, to what he had said, "Indeed, my Lord, this was my pure and simple motive."

"I doubt it not, Monsieur de Logères," replied the Duke, drawing towards him another dish — "I doubt it not; and this is a pure and simple salmi, and apparently as good a one as ever was cooked; but still, if you were to ask Maître Lanecque to analyse it — try it, good friend, you will find it an antidote against all the poisons and evils of the inn at Mareuil, and other such pestiferous places — but, as I was saying, if you were to ask Maître Lanecque to analyse this simple salmi, you would find it composed of some hundreds of different things besides the woodcock, which is the basis of the whole. All these accessories are admirable in

themselves, and contribute to make the woodcock better. And thus it is in life. Every human motive is a salmi, cooked by a skilful artist, for our own palates as well as those that observe them. There is one grand and apparent cause of action, which may be considered as the woodcock, but there are a thousand minor motives, incentives, and inducements, the condiments, the gravies, the truffles, the toast, which nobody ever thinks of counting, which pass, in fact, under cover of the woodcock, and which, nevertheless, all tend to make the salmi what it is. Now, I have no doubt on earth, my dear young friend, that the great motive of your coming hither was what you say; but were there not other motives joined therewith — feelings, designs, views, and purposes of your own, all mingling together, to aid and strengthen your original motive — in fact, to make up the salmi?"

Charles of Montsoreau knew and felt that there were ; for he could not help remembering the real cause of his quitting his brother's dwelling in such haste, and the resolutions then taken,

which were still strong within him, to be generous, even to the utmost extent of human generosity, towards one who had been ungenerous to him. He now looked down thoughtfully for a moment ; but he was by nature far too frank and open to conceal his thoughts from one who sought them in the way which they were sought by the Duke of Guise.

“ My Lord,” he said, “ if your Highness means to ask, whether there were or were not private feelings which induced me at once to plunge into contentions from which I had long withheld myself, and combined with the general public motives which otherwise called upon me so to do, I by no means deny that there were such feelings ; and had it not been for them — though I certainly think I should have joined your Highness before many months were over — yet it might not have been so early or so opportunely as it has turned out.”

The Duke smiled frankly, and replied, “ I thought so, Monsieur de Logères. You are always candid and true, and you shall see at once, by my next question, why I asked you this

so particularly. Tell me, has not a fair relation of mine, who has found a place of refuge in the castle of Montsoreau — has she not something to do with the motives that you speak of?”

“She has, my Lord,” replied Charles of Montsoreau — “but not in the way which I see you imagine.”

The Duke laughed. “What !” he exclaimed, — “pretty Mistress Marie of Clairvaut has, I suppose, been acting the prude with you, as usual, and gave you warning, when it was too late, that she intended to plunge herself into a convent. Take heart of grace, man — take heart of grace. Though she has ever yet shown herself, in these affairs of love, as cold as the top of the Vosges, and as hard as the nether-millstone, yet she is always candid and true, poor girl; and in two letters which have reached me from her hand, the one sent by your own courier, the other arriving to-day, she speaks of you, and of your services towards her, in terms that admit of no mistake. I do not mean to say you know that you have won her heart, because her heart

is not one easily won, but I do most assuredly think that you may win it; and if you do, as far as Henry of Guise's power goes, you win her too."

There is nothing so terrible on earth, as when some friendly hand approaches to our lips the cup of joy, seeing not, knowing not, that we must not, that we dare not, that we cannot drink, when accidental words, perhaps most kindly spoken, present to the eye of fancy, in colours more vivid than ever, the pictures that were once painted by the hand of hope, after every fair reality that they represented is done away, and nothing remains but the memory and the endurance. Terrible, indeed, was the temptation of Charles of Montsoreau, and terrible the struggle in his bosom. Not the arch-fiend himself could exhort man to break high resolutions more powerfully, than did the words spoken with the best intentions by the Duke of Guise. But amongst those words were a few, which, by recalling to the mind of the young nobleman most strongly the circumstances on which his determination was founded, gave him strength

to endure. Had the Duke said that he knew her heart was won, those few words would have put all his resolutions to an end; but he implied that her heart was not won, and it was upon that persuasion that all his purposes had been hitherto framed.

The Duke of Guise saw him once more turn very pale, and was not a little puzzled to divine the cause. "Why do you not answer?" he demanded, after pausing for a moment or two. "In consideration of a vast service, I have spoken to you as I would to no other man under a prince's dignity in Europe."

"And I am most grateful, my Lord," replied the Count; "but your Highness has mistaken me. My pretensions to the hand of Mademoiselle de Clairvaut are too small, too few to be thought of even by myself. My brother, indeed, may have greater pretensions. Your Highness knows that his estates in the south are considerable; that his race, though certainly not equal to that of the princely house of Guise, is as old and as pure as any in France; but he

has a thousand high qualities that you do not know. He is brave, skilful, with far more experience than myself, faithful and true in his attachments, and even more zealous and eager than I am in every thing he undertakes. Let any little services of mine, my Lord, be attributed to him; let him also serve and attach himself to your Highness; and let the sum of the affection and zeal of both in your cause induce you to look favourably upon his suit, even should he aspire to the hand of Mademoiselle de Clairvaut."

"By my faith," exclaimed the Duke of Guise, pushing the glass of wine which he was just about to drink away from him — "By my faith, this is the most extraordinary piece of business, I think, I ever heard of!" And he paused, thoughtfully gazing down upon the table. "You are a strange youth," he continued, "and there is something under this which I do not understand. But, be you sure, Maître Charles, that Maître Henri will unriddle it. And now let me tell you something that you do not know yourself. I have this very morning received an

epistle from your brother; an epistle which, though eloquent enough, well written, clear, and masterly, yet I love not altogether. He tells me, that the passports for my niece, from Henri of Navarre, have arrived; but that he judges it best, seeing the troubled state of the country, to escort her towards Soissons himself, with a sufficient band to protect her against any attack. He speaks of you, too, as '*a brother of his,*' and gives as a reason for delaying a day or two ere he sets out, that you had taken with you on your journey some men from the castle, so that it is necessary for him to increase his numbers ere he departs."

"That was hardly generous of him," said Charles of Montsoreau, calmly; "for I took no more than my own immediate retainers, except, indeed, the one man, Gondrin, whom your Highness knows, and who was born upon my own lands of Logères."

"Oh, I know him well, indeed," replied the Duke, "and owe him much. We will have him and the page in before we part, that I may

thank them. And so, Monsieur de Logères, you will let me do nothing for you."

"Say not so, my Lord," replied the Count, "I ask you much, when I ask you for the honour and the pleasure of serving under you, and also express the hope that you will always treat me and consider me as now."

"Oh, such requests are easily granted," said the Duke: "you shall command a company of my Albanians, and be ever near my person; but still I shall consider that there is a debt to be paid, and shall reserve the payment thereof for a year; and if you name not your own boon by that time, I shall force my gratitude upon you. There is some mystery in your conduct which at present I do not understand. But all earthly mysteries disappear, my good young friend. When they represented Time, they would have done well to put a torch in his hand as well as a scythe, for he throws light upon all things. I will write about the Albanian company this night."

"Your pardon, my Lord," replied Charles of Montsoreau — "but I would fain serve you at

the head of my own people. Give me but a month away from you, and I will bring you a hundred steel-caps from Logères, mounted, armed, and trained as well as any cavaliers in France. All the tenantry are bred to arms there from their infancy, so that but a short space will suffice."

"You are resolved to make me still more your debtor," said the Duke; "and I will acknowledge, that at the present moment the assistance of every brave and true-hearted man in France is needful to Henry of Guise; for oh, my young friend, I have to deal with as wily a serpent as ever was hatched in the Asiatic deserts. Were it but Henry of Navarre I had to deal with, the contest in this country would soon be settled, for as gallant a knight, and as noble a gentleman is he, as ever lived; frank, generous, and true; and with our lances in our hands and our helmets on our heads, we could decide the fate of France between us in an hour. But when I have to deal with one who, professing love and friendship, would poison the chalice, or arm the assassin's hand against me;

who, while he feigns to listen to my counsel, deals secretly with every enemy of his state and of his country; who betrays every secret that is intrusted to him as soon as he finds an interest in so doing; and who only sinks from the activity of evil-doing into voluptuous, effeminate, indecent repose;—when I have to deal with such a man as that, I say, the support of every true man in France is needful to me, to free my country from the evils that afflict her — never forgetting my duty to the crown. Go, my young friend, arm your vassals, bring to me every man that you can command, and you shall find Henry of Lorraine as deeply grateful to you for this new service as he is for that which is past. I will make no further professions to you. What I have said already ought to be enough to convince you, that with me, at least, neither the pride nor the ambition, of which they unjustly accuse our race, can stand in the way of gratitude. Now, however, let us have in your man Gondrin and your little page. He speaks, it seems to me, with a foreign accent. Where did you get him?"

As he spoke, the Duke rang a silver bell which stood by his side, and gave orders to the servant who appeared to seek for the two attendants of the young Count, and bring them before him. While he was absent, Charles of Montsoreau gave him a full account of his accidental meeting with the boy Ignati, and of his redeeming him from the hands of the Italians. The tale seemed to interest the Duke not a little; and, after musing for a moment, he said, "You see, my young friend, how kindness and services always render men greedy. I would to heaven that you would give me these two who have gone with me through such a moment of peril. I feel as if that boy were destined again to do me some great service."

"Take him, my Lord, with all my heart," replied Charles of Montsoreau, "not that I put any great faith in such presentiments; but as I redeemed the boy from these men only for his own good, far be it from me to stay him in any way from advancement. Your Highness remembers, however, that he is not noble, and therefore can scarcely be your page."

“Oh, we set our foot upon such things now,” replied the Duke—“the service of the Guise shall make him noble. But here they are. Come hither, good youth,” he added, as the boy and Gondrin entered—“let me look in your face: it seems to me as if I had seen you somewhere before. Your look pleases me, and memory seems to bring it back with pleasure. Where have I beheld you?”

The boy looked up in the Duke’s face, with his colour slightly heightened, but his manner calm and self-possessed. “You have seen me, my Lord,” he said, “in the good town of Nancy, in the palace of the noble Duke of Lorraine, upon the night of a high festival, where many a gallant lord and many a bright lady sat around you; and a poor Italian boy was brought in to dance and sing before the high table at which you feasted. The princes, and the nobles round, the beautiful women, and the politic matrons, poured their money into the cap which my hard taskmaster handed round; but the Duke of Guise alone called up poor Ignati to his side,

laid his hand upon his head, thanked him for his music, and gave him a broad piece of gold for himself."

"I remember," said the Duke, thoughtfully, "I remember. Well, boy, by that kind word, and that broad piece, it seems I have purchased service that never was bought at so light a rate. My good Lord of Logères, when the pistol of a reiter was within a foot of my breast, his finger on the trigger, and my life apparently at his mercy, with nothing but a grey doublet between me and destruction, this boy proved better to me than a breastplate of Milan steel, and, by driving his dagger into the heart of my adversary, saved the life of Henry of Guise, for whatever period God in his grace may grant it further. Will you give me this youth, my Lord, to be my page?"

The young Count bowed his head in token of assent, and the Duke went on. "What say you, boy? would you willingly serve me?"

The boy paused, and looked down, while the tears rose in his eyes. Then, turning his look

to Charles of Montsoreau, he said, "He has been very kind to me !"

"Come, come, Ignati," said the young Count, "I will not have your heart spoil your fortunes, my good youth. I took you for your own service, not for mine; and though I like you well, and would willingly have you with me, yet this is a noble offer, and must not be refused."

The boy then knelt down and kissed the Duke of Guise's hand, saying, "I am your Highness's servant."

"So shalt thou be, Ignati," replied the Duke, with one of the bright smiles of the Guise. "But I will tell thee what thou shalt do. Thou shalt go with this young lord to his lands of Logères, and be my spy upon all his actions and his thoughts. Then, if thou findest out that thing on all the earth which he most wishes and desires to possess, and bringest me the tidings thereof, thou shalt have a purse of broad pieces for thy pains. When he comes back, thou shalt come to be of my household; and, as I trust

that he will be ever near me, thou mayest find many a way of serving him also. — Now, good soldier,” he continued, turning to Gondrin, “you, too, have aided me well in a moment of great need : what recompense shall the Duke of Guise offer you? Will you take service with him, and he will care for your fortunes?”

“I thank you, my Lord,” replied Gondrin, bluntly. “But on this young gentleman’s lands was I born, his race have I served, his forest sports have I tended through all my life, and I think I will not leave him now, unless he dismount me out of his troop; and then, pardie! I think I shall follow him on foot. What I did for your Highness was done by his orders. I knew you but as Maître Henri, with a grey doublet and a cock’s feather, so that I deserve neither thanks nor recompense, though I will gladly serve your Highness under him, if God and the good Count so will it.”

“Would that there were many such as thou art!” said the Duke of Guise, thoughtfully. “There are few who will not quit old kindness

for new preferment. Here, my friend, take you that ring, in memory of Henry of Guise. It is a diamond, for which the goldsmiths will give five hundred crowns; but, should you ever want money, he who now gives it will gladly give a thousand crowns for it back again."

CHAP. XII.

THE rock which it meets with in its course turns the impetuous river from the way it was pursuing, even when it comes down in all the fury of the mountain torrent. The slight slope of a green hill, the rise of a grassy bank at an after-period, bends the calm stream hither and thither through the plains, offering the most beautiful image of the effect of circumstances on the course of human life. Some streams also become coloured by the earth they pass over, or mingle readily with the waters that flow into theirs. But there are a few — and they are always the mightiest and most profound — which retain their original hue and character, receive the tribute of other streams, pass over rocks and mountains, and through the midst of deep lakes, without the Rhone losing its glossy blue in the bosom of Lake Lemman, or the Rhine mingling

its clear stream with the waters of Constance or the current of the Maine.

The firm and powerful mind may be affected in its operations by circumstances, but not in its nature, and the depths of original character remain unchanged from the beginning to the end of life. Even strong feelings in such hearts, like objects cast upon a grand and rapid river, are borne along with the current through all scenes and circumstances, till with the waters themselves they plunge into the ocean of eternity.

Neither by nature nor by the period of his life was Charles of Montsoreau likely to retain and nourish long any light feelings of disappointment, but such was not the case with deep sorrows or with strong affections. His heart was of that firm and tenacious kind that it lost not readily any thing once strongly impressed upon it. The love of Marie de Clairvaut was one of those things never to be forgotten; the sorrows by which that love had been followed were never to be obliterated from his mind.

In the gay scenes of the sort of second court

which the Duke of Guise held for some days in the city of Rheims, Charles of Montsoreau mingled without any apparent grief weighing upon his mind, or any dark and gloomy memory seeming to oppress his spirit. He smiled with those who smiled, he admired all that was fine, and bright, and beautiful; and if he felt for a moment coming over him the deep melancholy with which he had quitted his own home, and which had now concentrated itself in his heart, he struggled against it and banished the outward appearance of it speedily, deriving only from those deeper feelings which lay concealed within, that degree of indifference towards the pleasures and amusements of youth which is seldom obtained but by experience. He forgot not Marie de Clairvaut, however — he forgot not the painful task which he had imposed upon himself; but he gladly occupied his immediate thoughts with the objects around him, and remained for some days well pleased himself, and not un-noted by others for his calm and graceful demeanour, amongst all

the proud nobles who now surrounded the princely Guise.

At length, however, all his attendants but two, whose wounds promised a tedious convalescence, were sufficiently recovered to enable him to pursue his journey to Logères; and he set out, with his train increased by six or seven veteran soldiers, whom the Duke spared to him, for the purpose of completing, as rapidly as possible, the discipline and training of his own retainers. As the distance was not far, and the Duke of Guise had given him more than one hint that no time was to be lost, he resolved to accomplish the march in one day; and, setting off early in the morning, approached Logères towards sunset upon a short spring day.

It was a wild and wooded country, on the borders of the ancient Ardennes, with the scene continually varying in minor points, but never changing the character of rough, solitary nature, which that part of France, and indeed many other parts, at that time displayed. Here the ground was rocky and mountainous, shooting up into tall hills covered with old woods; there,

smooth and even, with the feet of the primeval oaks carpeted with green turf. Then, again, came deep dells, and banks, and ravines, and dingles, so thick that the boar could scarcely force his way through the bushes; and then the trees fell back, and left the wild stream wandering through green meadows, or sporting amongst the masses of stone. If a village appeared, it was perched high up above the road, as if afraid of the passing strangers; if a cottage, it was nested in the brown wood, and scarcely to be distinguished from the surrounding banks. The air was now as warm as May, and all the sweet things that haunt the first dream of summer had come forth: the birds were tuning their earliest songs; the flowers were gathering round the roots of the trees, and the branches above them were making an effort, though but faint, to cast away the brown cloak of winter, and put on the green garmenture of the spring.

The evening sunshine was clear and smiling. Pouring from under a light cloud, which covered a part of the sky, it streamed in amongst the bolls and branches of the trees; it gilded the green

turf, and danced upon the yellow banks: and what between the wild music of the blackbird, and the thrush, and the woodlark, the flowers upon the ground, the balminess of the air, the spring sunshine, and the peaceful scene, Charles of Montsoreau felt his sorrows softened; and though not less deeply melancholy than before, yet owned the influence of that season, which is so near akin to youth and hope, and rode on with a vague, but sweet feeling, that brighter hours might come.

He had spent many a happy youthful day at Logères; and though he had forgotten much, so that the charm of novelty was not altogether wanting, he remembered enough to make his heart beat with the thrill of memory, while many an object, once familiar to his eye, rose up, as if to greet him on his return. At length, the road passing straight over a ridge of rising ground, showed him his own little village, in the sweet valley below, with the château rising on a tall hill that started up from the side of the little town, unconnected with any of the other heights around. The clouds that were in

the zenith at that moment were pouring forth a light shower of spring rain; the sun was shining bright near the edge of the horizon, catching on the weathercocks, and turrets, and windows of the château; while spanning over the castle and the village, and wavering on the face of the light grey cloud above was seen the radiant bow of heaven, the pledge of brightness for the days to come.

The young Count, as he paused for a moment to gaze, could hear gay distant voices, borne on the wind, rising up from the village in the valley. It was a cheerful sound; but, more than any thing else, it recalled the former times, and wove between them and the present a tissue of associations both sweet and melancholy. He thought of the gallant father, by whose knee he had played in those very scenes in other days; he thought of the mother, whose inheritance those lands had been; he thought of the mutual love and harmony that had subsisted between them all, and how death had taken two, and how disunion had arisen between the two that remained. He thought of

all this; and he thought of how — if fate had willed it otherwise—he might have led a happy bride to those glittering towers, have listened with her to the glad voices of the rejoicing peasantry, and have pointed to the sunshine that lit their dwelling, and the rainbow that waved across their sky, as auguries of hope, and happiness, and mutual love. He thought of all this, and how it was all in vain: and the tears filled his eyes, as he rode on towards the dwelling before him.

The two servants, whom he had sent on the day before, had spread the news, and given the probable hour of his coming; the street of the village was thronged with people, in their holiday attire; the old grey cross, and the rude stone fountain, were decked with flowers; the light-hearted peasantry echoed his name with shouts when he appeared, and greetings and gratulations poured forth upon him: but the heart of the young Count of Logères was sad. The face of nature reviving from the wintry cold, the voices of the birds, the eloquence of sunshine and of flowers, had soothed, and

calmed, and inspirited his heart; but the rejoicings of fellow-beings like himself—he knew not why, and he was angry to feel it—made him even more melancholy than before.

The elders of the village, conscious of dignity, the Count's own intendant, and the seneschal of his lands, came forward to greet him, and conduct him on his way, while Gondrin lingered behind, shaking hands with many an old friend, and inquiring after many an old acquaintance, vaunting the high deeds and noble qualities of his lord, and gladdening the hearts of the villagers with the promise of great doings at Logères.

Such was Charles of Montsoreau's arrival on his own estates; but the aspect of the interior of his dwelling again recalled bitter feelings and manifold regrets. But we must pass over such things, and merely notice briefly what followed after his arrival. Immediate inquiry showed him a state of things which few lords who absent themselves long from their own lands can ever hope to find:—his tenantry, his vassals, were in general contented and happy; no one

had been pressed hard upon by his officers in his absence ; no one brought forward any accusation of extortion or oppression ; and though there were many who had their little petition to present, or their request to make for the future, there was none who found occasion to complain of the past. At the same time, he found that considerable sums, and a considerable quantity of produce, had accumulated for his own use ; that there were large woods, the trees of which required to be thinned ; that the wool of many years yet remained to be sold ; that some distant mines had poured unexpected wealth into his coffers ; and that, in fact, great riches, which seemed still greater to an inexperienced eye, were immediately at his command.

The secret of all this was, that those left in authority behind him were all old tried and attached servants of his mother's house ; and the feudal system had that advantage at least, if it had no other, that it created an identity of interests between a lord and his servants, which nothing but blindness and folly could break through on either part.

On speaking with the old seneschal in regard to the military capacity and disposition of the people, the old man smiled at the question if he could raise a hundred strong troopers within the ensuing month.

“The ringing, sir, of the old ban-cloque,” he said, “which, thank God, I have heard but once in my day, would bring double the number of well-armed lads round your gate in an hour. They are only angry because, in all the feuds that have lately fallen out, I would never let them go to join either one party or another, if I could help it. Your own orders upon that head were strict; and I certainly thought it very wise, as long as they judged fit to leave us at peace here, to avoid all occasion of bringing feuds upon ourselves. Some of the young men stole away, indeed, whether I would or not, and took service with the good Duke of Guise against the reiters. They have almost all come back now; but the tales they bring of battles here and there, and driving the Germans out of France like sheep, are not likely

to make those that remained more fond of home."

"I have no wish," replied the Count, "to drain the place of its peasantry, good seneschal. A hundred men will be enough for my purpose, and of those, none but such as are willing. I would rather, of course, have those who have served already, if they are inclined to serve again under their own lord's banner. And now let this be arranged with all speed, for I have promised the Duke of Guise not to delay a day longer than necessary."

No delay or obstruction of any kind was met with by the young Count in his proceedings. Though neither very populous nor very productive, except in wood and pasture, his territories were very extensive; and no sooner were his wishes known, than many more volunteers flocked in to serve beneath his banner than he was willing to receive. With the old soldiers who accompanied him, and the aid of such of his peasantry as had served before, whatever was wanting to the discipline of the rest was soon accomplished. The providing

them with arms and horses occupied a somewhat longer time; but every thing was in active preparation, when, at the expiration of about a fortnight, a courier from the Duke of Guise arrived at Logères, bearing a letter dated from Soissons, and addressed to the young Count.

“I fear,” the letter said, “that this will not find you in such a state of preparation as to enable you to join me at once, at the little town of Gonnesse, with all the men you promised. If you could, however, advance at once towards that place, with whatever men you can command at the moment, you might render the greatest of services to Henry of Guise.

“It would be as well,” he continued in a postscript, “if you could cross the Aisne. My presence is required, with all speed, in the neighbourhood of Paris. I have not fifty men with me; and, notwithstanding the defeat of Auneau, I hear that a strong band of reiters has been seen in the neighbourhood of La Ferté sous Jouarre. If you can set off before night to-morrow, send me tidings that such is

the case by the messenger who bears this letter ; but do not go farther than Montigny before you hear more. God have you in his good keeping.

“HENRY OF GUISE.”

The consultation of Charles of Montsoreau with his seneschal was but short. He well knew that the field is the place to make good soldiers, and that but little more preparation was needful. He therefore caused his band to pass before the courier of the duke, and bade him tell that Prince what he saw, directing him to add, that he would, on the following day, make his first march towards La Ferté with fifty men ; and that, in four days more, the rest would follow, if by any possibility their arms could be prepared by that time. With this message he mounted him afresh, and sent him back to Soissons.

A night of bustle and preparation succeeded, which left little time for that indulgence of calm thought during which the heart broods over its own griefs, and but

increases them by contemplation. The first day's march was performed without danger or difficulty; and, not a little to the satisfaction of Charles of Montsoreau, the soldiers whom he had raised, being bred amongst a rural population, demeaned themselves peaceably and orderly amongst the inhabitants of the village where they halted for the night, so that no complaint was heard in the morning; and when they departed, many a villager was seen shaking hands with, and bidding God speed, the acquaintance of the evening before.

On the second day's march, which brought them to Grisolles, rumours and reports of the band of reiters which the Duke of Guise had mentioned began to reach their ears. The peasantry showed every sign of rejoicing on their appearance; and as they rode through the various villages, the young Count's horse was often surrounded by the peasantry, giving him this report or that, and expressing a hope that he had come to deliver them from the marauding strangers. On the third day's march towards Montigny, more accurate information

was obtained concerning the real position and proceedings of the band of German adventurers, who were represented as lying further down towards the Marne, in the woods and hamlets about Gland and La Fern, intercepting the passengers on the roads between Château Thierry, Epernay, and La Ferté; the lower part of which latter town they were said to have attacked and plundered. Manifold were the entreaties now addressed to Charles of Montsoreau by the wealthy farmers and proprietors of that rich tract of country to go at once against the marauders, and drive them across the Marne. But he adhered firmly to his resolution of obeying the Duke's orders; and after halting for some hours to refresh his horses and men at Gandelu, he again began his march towards three o'clock in the evening, expecting to arrive at Montigny before night-fall.

On the whole of the road he had received no greater service from any one than from the boy Ignati, whose light weight and arms did not fatigue his horse so much as those of the other

horsemen, and who was constantly riding hither and thither through the country obtaining intelligence, and bringing it rapidly to the young Count. He had left the little village of Gandelu about a quarter of an hour before the rest of the troop, and was not seen again for nearly an hour and a half after it had recommenced its march. The Count had asked for him more than once, and had become somewhat apprehensive regarding him, when, as they were passing through the wood of Ampon, his anxiety regarding the boy was not diminished by hearing a discharge of fire-arms at some distance, but apparently in advance. He was relieved on Ignati's account, however, in a moment after, by seeing him coming at full speed through the wood in apparent excitement and alarm.

“Quick ! quick, my Lord !” he cried : “down in the meadow there, the Schwartz reiters have attacked a gallant little band just crossing a small stream, and are driving them back towards the Marne. I saw some ladies in

a carriage, too; and they must have fallen by this time into the hands of the enemy."

No further inducement was wanting to Charles of Montsoreau. Giving orders to quicken his men's pace, he himself advanced at still greater speed, till he reached the point where the road issued forth from the wood upon the meadow, where he had at once before him, at the distance of scarcely three hundred yards, the whole scene which the boy had described, though it was, of course, somewhat changed in aspect during the time which had since elapsed.

On the bank of the small stream which, flowing through a slight hollow in the meadow, proceeded towards the Marne, was seen a party of some thirty or forty horsemen, the greater part of them well armed, making a gallant but ineffectual stand against a body of reiters nearly double their number, which charged them on every side, and seemed likely to overpower them in a few minutes. That, however, which struck Charles of Montsoreau the most, was to see, in the very front of the party who opposed the reiters, a man dressed in a clerical

habit, who seemed, with the utmost coolness, skill, and determination, to be directing the movements of those around him, for the purpose of extricating a heavy carriage which was embarrassed in the bed of the rivulet.

The forms of the reiters passing here and there obscured the view of his person from time to time ; but Charles of Montsoreau felt sure that his eyes could not deceive him, when they told him that there, in the midst of the fight, was the form of his old preceptor, the Abbé de Boisguerin. A moment after, he caught sight of his brother also, and prepared, without the loss of an instant, to extricate the whole party from their perilous situation.

The numbers which he brought were hardly sufficient to make his band, even when united with that of his brother, equal numerically to that of the reiters. But he knew that there was much in surprise ; and, though he did not exactly despise his enemy, yet he by no means looked upon each reiter as a match for one of his own men at arms. His troopers had followed him at all speed ; and,

the moment they came up, his orders were given, the lances levelled, the spurs struck into every horse's sides, and down the gentle slope they went, against the flank of the enemy, with a speed and determination that proved for the moment quite irresistible. The commander of the foreigners had scarcely time to wheel a part of his force to receive the charge of this new adversary, before the troops of Logères were upon him, and, in a moment, he was driven down the stream for nearly fifty yards.

But the marauders had one great advantage over ordinary troops. Accustomed to fight in small parties, and even hand to hand, they were fully as much, if not more, in their element when their ranks were broken than when they were in a compact mass, and Charles of Montsoreau now found that the success of his first onset by no means dispirited them; but that, superior in numbers to his own soldiery, they met his troopers man to man, and that a body was even detached to pursue the carriage, which by this time had been extricated; while neither his brother nor the Abbé de Boisguerin, embar-

rassed in protecting the unarmed persons of their own party, thought it needful to give him the slightest assistance in his contention with the reiters.

Under these circumstances, the only thing that appeared to be left for him to do, was to keep his men in the most perfect order, and fall gradually back, covering his brother's band, and sending to demand his co-operation for their mutual benefit. The reiters, however, in the mean time, made every effort to frustrate this purpose, which they at once divined, and by repeated charges endeavoured to break his line, and force him to fight after their own manner. In pursuing this plan, however, they committed the oversight of making a part of their body cross the stream in order to take him on the flank.

With a quickness of perception, which he generally displayed in times of difficulty and danger, he had remarked, even while in the act of charging the enemy, that the stream higher up grew deeper, and the banks more steep. He now saw that, by falling back a

little farther than he had at first intended, he could deal with the Germans in separate bodies, and in all probability rout them band by band.

To do so, however, obliged him to leave his brother's party, the carriage, and those whom he knew it contained, to struggle unassisted with the little force which had been detached from the reiters, as well as they might, and for a moment he remained in a state of suspense which almost lost him the advantage. The hour, however, was late; the shades of evening were beginning to fall: one look to the other side of the field showed him that the first attack of the reiters on his brother's party had been repulsed, apparently with considerable loss, and he accordingly took his resolution, and gave orders to retreat slowly up the stream, preparing his men, however, to charge again the moment that he found it expedient so to do.

The reiters, thinking him defeated and intimidated, pursued him fiercely, and those on the right bank of the stream galloped quickly on to cut him off from a retreat by the high road. But

the others immediately in front of him were surprised, and somewhat astounded, to find that as soon as he perceived the stream was deep enough, and the bank was high enough—if not to prevent the other body of reiters from crossing, at all events to embarrass and to delay them—the order was given to the French troopers to charge, and the young Count and his band came down upon them with a shock which scattered them before him in an instant.

He was now, in turn, superior to that party in numbers, and knowing that not a moment was to be lost, he exerted every energy of mind and body. With his own hand he struck the commander from his horse, and urging on his men with all speed, drove a number of the scattered parties over the banks into the stream. Some escaped unhurt to the other side, but in many instances the horses fell, and rolled over into the water with their riders; and in the mean time terrible havoc was going on amongst those who remained upon the bank.

The pistols and musketoons of the German soldiery had been discharged in the first

contest with his brother ; but the troops of Logères, charging with the lance, had still their fire-arms loaded : and seeing that the struggle with the sword might be protracted till the other party came up, the young commander shouted loudly to his men to use their fire-arms. His voice was heard even in the midst of the strife ; and now mingled as the two parties were with each other, the effect of the pistol was terrible. A number of the enemy were killed and thrown from their horses on the spot, a number were wounded, and unable to continue the conflict, and the rest, seized with panic, were flying amain, when the other band, seeing the error that had been committed, endeavoured to repair it by crossing the stream and attacking Charles of Montsoreau in the rear.

Though they succeeded in their first object, it was with difficulty and in disorder, some choosing one place, some, not liking to venture too far, seeking a safer passage ; and heavily armed as were both horses and men, the task was certainly one of great danger. In the midst of the strife which he was carrying on, the young

Count had not failed to watch eagerly, from time to time, the movements of the party on the other bank.

The body immediately opposed to him was by this time completely routed, and in full flight; and wheeling his men to encounter the other, he calmly brought them once more into good order, and led them to the charge.

But the leader of the enemy in that part of the field seeing that he had come too late, and that his men were in no condition to protract the struggle with success, was wise enough not to attempt to play out a losing game. Giving orders for instant retreat, he kept a firm face to his adversary, till his men had recovered from the disorder of crossing the water, and then marched firmly up the hill, facing round every two or three minutes to receive the charge of the French troopers, and not suffering his pace to be hurried, though he lost several men as he went.

The sight, however, of a group of peasantry, watching the strife from a part of the road above, seemed to strike the reiters, who probably mistook them for a fresh band

of soldiers, with panic and dismay. Their leader lost all command over them ; and though he was seen in vain endeavouring to rally them, and keep them in their ranks, they fled down the road at full speed, pursued by Charles of Montsoreau and his band for some time, till the coming on of night rendered it useless to protract the chase any farther.

The young officer then caused the recall to be sounded, and turned his bridle rein towards the field where the skirmish had taken place, in order both to ascertain what was the amount of his own loss, and to give assistance to the wounded. He found a number of peasants on the field ; and though in all instances they were giving the tenderest care and attention to the wounded troopers of Logères, there was too good reason to suspect that the knife of the boor had been employed without mercy to end the course of any of the wounded Germans who had fallen into their hands. Only two were found alive upon the field, and it is probable that they owed their lives to the return of Charles of Montsoreau.

His own loss in persons actually killed was very slight, but a number were severely wounded; and in order to gain some assistance for these poor men, it was necessary, of course, to proceed to the nearest town. On inquiring what that was, the peasantry replied that none was nearer than La Ferté sous Jouarre, and thither the young Count bent his steps, as soon as some litters and carriages could be procured to bear the wounded men.

CHAP. XIII.

NIGHT had fallen heavily over the world, ere Charles of Montsoreau and his party approached the town of La Ferté: but the moon was coming out heavily from behind the clouds, and cast a silvery radiance over all that part of the sky which lay behind the heights of Jouarre, throwing out a part of the towers and pinnacles of the old abbey in clear relief, as they rose above the shoulder of the hill.

But there were other lights in the prospect of a different hue, which not a little puzzled Charles of Montsoreau, as he rode on at the head of his men. What seemed to be torches, by the red and heavy glare they gave, were seen moving about fitfully amongst the banks and vineyards on the heights, and, in a minute or two after, a horseman passed the young Count at full speed.

He turned suddenly from the path, however, and plunged his horse down the banks into the neighbouring meadow, as soon as he saw the body of men at arms; but though the young Count judged it useless to pursue him, the faint light that was in the sky was quite sufficient to enable him to judge that he belonged to a part of the marauding band which had been defeated in the morning. He concluded, naturally and rightly, that he was one of those who had followed the party of his brother Gaspar, and had probably pursued it towards Jouarre. A moment or two after, the sound of coming horses again met his ear; and, ordering some of his men to advance, and cut off the way into the meadow, he halted the rest of the troop, and waited in listening expectation.

At the end of a few minutes, three more horsemen appeared, and dashed into the very midst of the ambush that the young Count had laid for them.

“Halt, and surrender!” he cried in a loud tone, ordering his men at the same time to close

round them; and the reiters, for such indeed they were, finding escape impossible, yielded without resistance. From them Charles of Montsoreau found that his suspicions were true, and that they formed part of the band which had pursued his brother towards La Ferté. He could gain no further information, however, from the men he had taken, except that the Marquis had effected his retreat in safety, and that a large body of armed burghers, coming out from La Ferté, had forced the reiters to fly with all speed.

Having given the prisoners in charge to those who would not lose sight of them, Charles of Montsoreau resumed his march; and, as his band approached La Ferté, their trumpet sang cheerily out in the clear night, giving notice to the citizens of the arrival of a friendly party.

The streets were now full of horses and people, the red light of the torches flashing upon the eager and excited countenances of those who had taken part in the affray; and, by the glare, Charles of Montsoreau easily distinguished the chief inn, with a number of

horses held around the door, and a group of fifteen or sixteen persons gathered together round one, in whom he at once recognised his brother.

Perhaps Charles of Montsoreau had not any cause to be more satisfied with that brother's conduct during the eventful day which had just passed, than he had been with that which preceded his departure from Montsoreau. But fraternal affection was strong at his heart, and halting his men in the market-place, he rode up with the page and two or three others to congratulate his brother, and ask how he fared after the perils he had undergone. He was surprised, however, as he came near, to see a heavy cloud lowering on the Marquis's brow, and his eyes rolling with an expression both fierce and anxious.

“ So, Charles of Montsoreau,” he exclaimed in a loud harsh tone, even before his brother could dismount, “ so you have come to render an account of your conduct this day, I trust, and to explain away the treachery which is but too evident.”

The young Count heard him with surprise,

as may be well supposed ; but he saw that he was under the excitement of some strong passion, and instantly dismounting from his horse, he walked up to his brother through the crowd, holding out his hand, and saying, “ Gaspar, you are under some mistake. How do you fare ? You shall explain to me what is the matter within.”

But the Marquis put his hand angrily by, exclaiming, “ I take no hand stained with such treachery, even though it be my brother’s. I care not who sees or who hears. I suppose, sir, you have brought the Lady with you, whom you have contrived to rescue once more, by first leading her into danger, that you might then deliver her from it.”

“ I can hardly suppose you sane, Gaspar de Montsoreau,” replied his brother at length. “ What danger have I led you or any one else into ? though you say true, when you say that I have delivered you, even when you thought fit to give me no assistance. But I ask again, What danger have I led you into, or any one else ? What is it that you mean ?”

“Pshaw!” exclaimed his brother, turning away with a look of contempt, which was very hard to bear. “You had better bring the Lady into the house, sir, and let her take some repose; and if she be not altogether blinded, I will take care to explain to her how all this day’s brilliant achievements have been brought about.”

“In the name of God, Gaspar of Montsoreau!” exclaimed his brother, at length, “what is it that you mean? What Lady? Where is Mademoiselle de Clairvaut? What madness has seized upon you now?”

Gaspar of Montsoreau took a step forward, till he almost touched his brother, and demanded in a voice that was loud, but that trembled with passion, “Did I not see your page, that very page who is holding your horse now—that very page, who was pointed out to me by one that knows him well, as your bought bondsman—did I not see him—can you deny it?—did I not see him with the reiters at the moment that they charged down the hill upon us? And then I saw him by your side five minutes after, when you came pretending to assist us.”

“The man’s mad, or drunk !” said the boy aloud ; but Charles of Montsoreau turned upon him sharply, exclaiming, “Hush ! Remember, sir, he is my brother !”

“I am sorry that he is, sir,” replied the boy. “He might see me near the reiters, but he never saw me with them, for I had been watching them for half an hour, concealed behind a great mass of bushes, and not daring to stir for my very life, till I saw them begin to ride down the hill, when I came out and galloped as fast as I could to tell my noble Lord, and bring him up to attack them. — Out upon it ! — Pretending to help any one, when there is scarcely a man in the troop unwounded ! — Out upon it ! — Pretending to attack the reiters, when he has well nigh cut them to pieces, and not left two men together of the whole band !”

The boy spoke loud and indignantly, and at the joyful news of the marauders being cut to pieces, a glad shout burst from the town’s people, who had gathered round, listening with no small surprise to the dispute between the two brothers.

“For Heaven’s sake, Gaspar,” said Charles of Montsoreau, “govern your feelings for a few minutes. I am here on the service of the noble Duke of Guise, and set out from Logères only three days ago. I had heard of the reiters by the way, and determined to fight them if I met them. The first moment that I saw or had any communication with them — on my honour and on my soul! — was that when I ordered my men to level their lances, and charge them in the flank. You have nothing to do but either to look at the banks of the stream, where they lay by dozens, to speak to the prisoners I have brought in, or to take one glance into those litters and those carts that carry my own wounded, to show you that it was no feigned strife, as you have wildly fancied, that went on between us. And now believing this, and feeling that you have done me wrong, tell me where is Mademoiselle de Clairvaut, for your words alarm and agitate me concerning her? Where is she, Gaspar? I say where is she?”

“I know not,” said the Marquis, turning sullenly away, “I know not, Charles. In the

last charge of the reiters, which happened nearly at night-fall, they drove us beyond the carriage, and I have seen no more of her. The Abbé, however, was with her, and he has not come up either ; two or three of the men, too, were there."

"Bring up the prisoners," exclaimed Charles of Montsoreau, with a degree of agony of mind that it is impossible to conceive. "These men can give us information, for we took them on the road just now. — Bring up those prisoners."

With their arms tied, and their heads uncovered, the three Germans, who had endeavoured, as was customary with many of their bands, to make themselves look as fierce and terrible as possible, by suffering their hair and beards to grow in confused and tangled masses, were now brought before the young commander ; and gazing sternly upon them, he said, "You are here not as fair and open enemies, but as plunderers and marauders, after the generals who brought you here have retreated from the land, and entered into a treaty with the King of this country. Your only way, then, of ob-

taining any portion of mercy is, by answering the questions I am going to ask you distinctly and truly ; for if I catch the slightest wavering or falsehood in your replies, I will have you shot one by one within the next five minutes, as a just punishment for the crimes that you have committed."

His words seemed to make little or no impression upon men accustomed to the daily contemplation of death. They all seemed to understand him, however, though it was with difficulty that they answered him in his own language, mingling German with French, so as to render it nearly unintelligible.

" We will tell you the truth to be sure," replied one of the men. " What should we tell you a lie for? All that ought to be lied about you know already ; so we can do no harm by telling you the truth, and may do our own throats harm by telling you a lie. Hundred thousand ! Ask your questions, and you shall have truth."

It was in vain, however, that Charles of Montsoreau questioned the man sternly and strictly

in regard to what had become of Marie de Clairvaut, and those who were with her. It was evident that he knew nothing. He admitted that they had driven the party of the Marquis beyond the carriage, and had passed it themselves in the eagerness of pursuit; but the sudden appearance of the armed burghers of La Ferté had caused them, he said, to retreat in great haste, and in separate parties. He and those who were with him had not taken the same road by which they came, and had seen nothing of the carriage.

This information, though so scanty, afforded Charles of Montsoreau a hope. "If the road," he exclaimed eagerly, "on which these men were captured, is not the same on which the carriage was left, it may still be there, and Mademoiselle de Clairvaut safe."

But his brother shook his head with an air of sullen grief and despair. "No!" he said, "No, the carriage is not there! I have been out myself to seek it, and have passed the spot. Not a trace of it was to be seen, and I only returned when I heard your trumpets, believ-

ing that you were bringing in your prize in triumph."

"You have learnt, Gaspar," said his brother, "I know not why or how, to do me sad injustice. However, it is the duty of both of us not to close an eye till we have discovered what has become of the young Lady whom you undertook to conduct in safety till she was under the protection of her relations."

"I see not how it is your duty, Charles," replied his brother, sharply. "I, as you say, undertook to conduct her, and therefore it is my duty; but you, it seems to me, have nothing to do with it."

"It is my duty, Gaspar," replied his brother, "as a gentleman, and as a man of honour; and it is also my duty as an attached friend of the Duke of Guise; so that I shall seek for her this very instant. Let us both to horse again; let us obtain guides who know the country well. You take one circuit, I will take another; and as there is now no farther fear of any attack from the reiters, we can suffer the greater part of our men to repose, and meeting here in the

morning, report to each other what we have done, and concert together what steps are farther to be taken. — And oh, Gaspar,” he continued, “let us, I beseech you, let us act together in a brotherly spirit; do justice to my motives and intentions, for they have been all what is kind and brotherly towards yourself.”

“Doubtless,” said the Marquis of Montsoreau, with one of those bitter sneers, which the determination of persisting in wrong too often supplies to the uncandid and ungenerous: “doubtless your motives and intentions were good and brotherly, when the first thing that you did after learning from the Abbé de Boisguerin my feelings, wishes, and hopes, was instantly to seek the Duke of Guise for the purpose of prepossessing him in your favour, and against my suit.”

“In this, as in all else, you do me wrong, Gaspar,” replied his brother; “and so you will find it when you see the Duke: but I cannot pause to explain all this. We lose time, precious and invaluable. — Gondrin, call out ten of our freshest and best mounted men. Let

surgeons be obtained immediately to dress the wounds of the hurt, and tell Alain and Mortier to provide for the comfort and refreshment of the rest, according to the orders I gave them as we came along. Take this German with us, as a sure guide to show us the spot where the carriage was last seen. If I might advise you, Gaspar, you will go round under Jouarre, and stretch out till you reach Montreuil. The carriage cannot have passed the Marne except by this bridge, so that —”

“I shall follow my own plan, Charles of Montsoreau,” said the Marquis sullenly; “I want not an instructor as well as a rival in my younger brother.” And thus saying, he turned away to give his own orders to some of those who surrounded him.

In the mean time his brother remounted his horse in haste; and, followed by Gondrin, and the ten men who had been selected, he set out upon his search. That search, however, proved utterly vain. No tidings whatsoever of Marie de Clairvaut, or those who accompanied her, were to be obtained; the peasantry, in terror of

the reiters, had kept all their cottages closed and defended as best they could ; and, with few if any of them, Charles of Montsoreau could open a communication, as every door that they applied to was shut, and in general nothing but sullen silence was returned to his application for admittance or information. In the few instances where the sound of his voice, speaking in the French tongue, obtained for him any answer, the reply was still the same, that they had kept all closed, from fear of the reiters, and had neither seen nor heard of any one passing since nightfall.

With horses and men wearied and exhausted by their fruitless search, and with his own brow aching, and his heart sad and anxious, Charles of Montsoreau returned towards daybreak to the town of La Ferté. His brother, he found, had arrived some time before him, and had retired to rest without waiting for his arrival. The young nobleman argued from that fact, that though the Marquis had not absolutely brought back the carriage with him to La Ferté, he must have obtained some satisfactory intelligence con-

cerning it; and, unbuckling his arms, without, however, casting off the dress he wore beneath, he cast himself down to rest in the apartment which had been prepared for him.

Though much fatigued, however, and with a mind and body both exhausted by all the events and anxieties of the day, sleep refused to visit his eyelids. His busy thoughts turned to every painful theme that memory could supply from the past, or despondency call up out of the future; and finding that it was in vain to seek repose at that moment, he approached the deep casement, threw open the window, and gazed out into the market-square, which lay directly beneath his apartments.

The morning was advancing brightly; the spring sunshine sparkling down the principal street, through an opening in which the Marne was seen flowing gaily on, with the open country rising up behind. The little market-cross was surrounded by the carts and litters in which he had brought in the wounded men, and some of the early townsmen were already seen walking hither and thither, while

peasants and country-women in gay dresses came in one by one, now driving a horse or an ass loaded with the produce of their farms, now bearing the whole of their little store in a basket on their shoulders or their arm. Most of them paused to consider and to comment upon the array of vehicles round the cross, talking in a low voice, as if fearful of breaking the stillness of the morning hour. The scene was calm, and quiet, and soothing; and feeling tranquilised after gazing at it for some minutes, the young Count again turned to his couch, and wooed the blessing of slumber not now in vain. He slept profoundly, and might have gone on for many hours, had he not been awakened about nine o'clock by the page Ignati pulling him by the arm.

“What is the matter, Ignati?” he cried, starting up. “You seem in haste and agitated.”

“Your brother is on horseback, and setting out,” cried the boy; “and he has learned tidings of the Lady, which will fit ill with your wishes or those of the Duke.”

“What tidings, Ignati?” exclaimed the

young Count eagerly. "Quick boy, do not keep me in suspense."

"See your brother, and he will tell you," said the boy. "If he does not, I will. But, quick, or he will be away; run down at once, even as you are."

Charles of Montsoreau hastened towards the door, dressed as he was in the buff coat which he wore beneath his armour; and from the stairs heard sounds that hastened all his movements. There was the trampling of horses, and the noise of many tongues in the court-yard, but above all the voice of his brother, ordering his men as if for instant departure.

When he reached the foot of the staircase, which led into the great court of the inn, he found that those sounds had not deceived him. Gaspar de Montsoreau was on horseback, with his men drawn up in line ready to depart; and a cart containing two or three wounded men, and all the baggage which had not fallen into the hands of the reiters, was in the act of issuing forth through the archway into the market-place. There was an air of eager and somewhat

scornful triumph on the face of the Marquis de Montsoreau ; and, at the very moment of the young Count's appearance, he was turning to speak with a well-dressed cavalier by his side, whom his brother had never before beheld.

As soon as the eyes of the two brothers met, the Marquis exclaimed aloud, in a scoffing tone, addressing his new companion, "Ha, Monsieur de Colombel ! By Heaven here comes my good young brother of Logères ! We must put spurs to our horses and ride quick, for he has taken service, it seems, with the Duke of Guise — commands a band of stout men-at-arms, enough to overpower us here — and may think fit to arrest us on the spot, if he finds that we are not of the same party as himself. He is not one to be stopped by brotherly love or consideration, I can assure you."

"Nay !" replied the cavalier whom he addressed, speaking with a courtly but significant smile, "the Duke of Guise is King Henry's dear friend and faithful cousin, and professes every sort of reverence for the crown of France."

The whole of this was spoken, as Charles of

Montsoreau advanced towards them, with an evident intention that he should hear it; but he took not the slightest notice, and walking up calmly to the side of his brother's horse, he said, "This is not kind of you, Gaspar, to quit the place thus early, without giving me an opportunity of explaining to you things which you have misinterpreted and taken amiss."

"As you said to me last night, Charles," replied his brother, "I have not time for long explanations now; every minute is precious and invaluable. You can write to me if you have any thing to explain."

"You will inform me at least then," said his brother, "whether you have obtained any news of Mademoiselle de Clairvaut, and where she is."

"I am in haste! I am in haste, good brother!" replied the Marquis, "and can only wait to tell you that she is in safe hands and well, which must be enough to satisfy you."

"Not quite," answered Charles of Montsoreau. "As I am now upon my way to meet the Duke of Guise, and shall most likely reach him before you do, it will be but courteous of you to send

him some fuller information regarding a Lady so nearly connected with himself."

"If you do not reach him before I do," replied his brother with a grim smile, "you and he will be long parted from each other, my good brother; and as to Mademoiselle de Clairvaut, she is in safe hands, and will be well taken care of. Fare you well, my brother. Now march, my men!" And without waiting for any other reply, he shook his bridle and rode out of the court.

The patience of Charles of Montsoreau was nearly at an end, and he paused, gazing upon the ground for a minute or two, before he could overcome the pain and indignation that he felt. He then turned to his own chamber again, beckoning to the boy Ignati, who was still upon the stairs, to follow him thither.

"Now, Ignati," he said, "What is the meaning of all this? You have probably heard all that has passed. Give me what information you can, without loss of time."

"This is all that I know," replied the boy; "but it is enough. Mademoiselle de Clair-

vaut, the Lady whom you were asking about last night, has met with a party of the King's troops which had been sent against the reiters, and has by them been carried to Château Thiery, whence she sent that cavalier whom you saw with your brother, to tell him what had become of her. All those facts I heard the cavalier himself relate: but from the page he brought with him, who was in the room, or at least at the door, when his master and the Marquis were speaking, I gathered, that this Monsieur de Colombel — by the advice of some priest who accompanied Mademoiselle de Clairvaut, I know not whom — has persuaded your brother to join the party of the King, telling him that Henry would certainly hold Mademoiselle de Clairvaut as a hostage for the Duke's good conduct, and would most likely bestow her upon any one he thought fit."

Charles of Montsoreau pressed his hand firmly upon his brow for two or three minutes. He had been learning for some time those dark and painful lessons of human nature which come so bitterly to a noble and a generous heart, when first the world, the contentions of self-interest,

and the strife of passion, teaches us how few, how very few, there are who have any thought or motive in all their actions but the mean ungenerous ones of self — those bitter lessons which fix upon mature life the sad, the dark, the horrible companionship of doubt and suspicion.

“Can I,” he muttered, speaking to himself, “can I have been mistaken in the Abbé de Boisguerin? Can I have trusted, and believed, and revered, where neither trust, nor belief, nor reverence was due? — It cannot be! No, it cannot be!” And after thinking again over all that the page had said, he added aloud, “The King’s troops at Château Thiery! — The Duke at Gonesse! — We must lose no time, but get to Montigny as speedily as possible.”

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

HENRY
OF
GUISE.

BY
G. P. R. JAMES, ESQ.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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